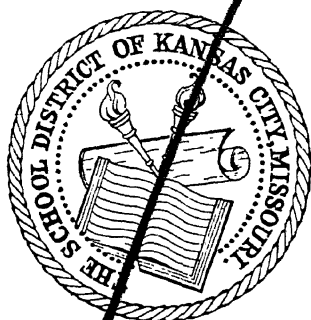




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# EDGEHILL ESSAYS

BY

ADRIAN HOFFMAN JOLINE

Author of

“Meditations of an Autograph Collector”

“The Diversions of a Book Lover”

“At the Library Table”

&c.



BOSTON

RICHARD G. BADGER

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To M.



## PREFACE

**T**O dignify these desultory papers by the title of "Essays," may seem presumptuous; but by a liberal construction of the dictionary definition, they may be so styled without grave offence, for they are short sketches, disquisitions, and experiments. Far be it from me to make pretense to the honorable name of "essayist." "Essayists, like poets, are born and not made," says Henley, and I am glad that he adds concerning the essayist, "for wisdom, it is not absolutely necessary that he have it." That relieves my mind greatly. He also assures us that the essayist "seems to write not for bread nor for a place in society, but for the pleasure of writing." This also reassures me.

At all events, whether these are essays or something infinitely less, they were written at Edgehill; not the place in Warwickshire where Charles I. and Essex fought their famous battle, nor the rambling building at Princeton where years ago lads were prepared for college, but in a New Jersey cottage on the brow of a hill. The atmosphere there is more bookish than that of Wall Street, but it must be owned that some essays produced in that financial region have been pecuniarily more profitable than their country companions. They were railway mortgages. The style was dry and monotonous, but it was serious and convincing. No one ever disagreed with my views as expressed in those contributions to literature; whereas in other fields almost everyone refuses to concur with

me, except when I am merely "embroidering the obvious," as a pert man in *Life* unkindly said in regard to a modern essay-writer.

In the longest of these papers it was not my purpose to present an original review of the life and work of Francis Jeffrey, but only to give an outline of his career and to cite some contemporaneous estimates of his personality, his character, and his merits. He is now little known except to those who make a study of the books of the middle nineteenth century. His "Life" by Cockburn is a melancholy monument of dull mediocrity on the part of the biographer. Sir Leslie Stephen's admirable sketch in the *Dictionary of National Biography* is far more satisfactory and I have used it freely. In recent years Professor Gates has published a critical study of Jeffrey as a reviewer in *Three Studies in Literature* (1899), and Professor Winchester has added a brief supplement in his *Group of English Essayists* (1910). I have not attempted to invade their province. If I have quoted liberally from books of gossip and reminiscence, it has been because the writers gave a more vivid presentation of their subject than I could give by mere paraphrase.

ADRIAN H. JOLINE.

Edgehill, Bernardsville, New Jersey.

November, 1910.



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## ABOUT THE BOOKSHELVES

SOMETIMES it seems to most of us that much good paper and precious time are wasted in the preparation and publication of books about books, variously entitled "Diversions", "Excursions", "Reflections", "Rambles", "Wanderings", "Among My Books", "Book-Lovers", "Book Collectors", and all the other names devised with more or less ingenuity by the tribe of scribblers. In our utilitarian age they must often appear vain, trifling, purposeless and tiresome. It may be that in rare instances they are mildly amusing; but when we are deafened from day to day by the cry of the superior person that we must be continually striving "for the nation's service", with only brief intermissions for food and sleep, and that culture is something to be despised because it does nothing to "advance the interests of humanity", we are led to admit that those of us who give serious attention to mere books ought to hide our heads in shame and try to escape conviction of the offence of being what Jesse Lynch Williams would call "lily-handed dilettanti"; useless, futile, as unworthy as the skulkers on the field of battle. It is true that indictments have rather lost their terrors in our times, because almost everyone is being indicted for something, and a man scarcely ventures to join a friend in smoking an after-dinner cigar lest he be arrested for "conspiracy", which in its last analysis, means a "breathing together"; and while, as far as I know, neither the statutes of the

United States nor those of the forty-six States—soon to be forty-eight—forbid our breathing as long as we do it alone, we incur grave risks if we do it in company with another.

This sort of apology is common with writers about books. In his preface to *Excursions in Libraria*, Mr. G. H. Powell falls into line and tries to convince us that he is addressing himself “rather to the humane interests of the general reader, than to what may respectfully be called the refined curiosities of the bibliophile, to the collector of books, that is, as books, and not as antiquities or objects of exoteric *virtu*, in fine, to the book-buyer who is also, and by virtue of his office, a ‘voracious’ reader, even if he be not one of those

‘*Bibliophagi*, or men whose heads  
Do grow beneath their shoulders’

from excessive application to study.” I am not going to make any more excuses; to those who love books they are offensive, and to those who do not care for books “as books”, they are superfluous.

To be candid, some of the many volumes of book-gossip are neither entertaining nor profitable. Having been guilty of inflicting one or two upon a patient public—but as the sales were small the number of the afflicted was limited—I may be allowed to say that I think the popular disregard of them is abundantly justified. I encountered recently one of these “Book Excursions” which convinced me that the hostile judgment is sound. The writer gravely tells us that “Goldsmith was a delightful author”, and vouchsafes the information that “Mrs. Lewes (sic) was ‘George Eliot’ ” and that Dickens was known as ‘Boz’. One

longs for Charles Lamb's candle to examine this man's bumps.\* We are further assured that "the letters and journals of men who have filled positions of public trust are often of the utmost value." This book contains another passage which is more offensive than amusing. What shall we think of an author who says: "The Protestant Episcopal burial service, much lauded in certain quarters, is well adapted to the commonplace ministrations of an ordinary priest, but its fixed and unalterable sentences and sonorous but insipid platitudes are poorly adjusted to finer needs!" After that, we may not wonder that this "extraordinary priest" or, more properly, minister, who is probably offended by the "fixed and unalterable sentences" of the Holy Scriptures, embellishes his book with a portrait of *himself*! Yet the book occupies space on the shelves, and is "advertised" as "of rare interest and charm". I am glad it is rare.

The love of books seems to be inherent in some natures. I venture to say that no one will dispute that assertion, which, as I reflect about it, appears to be of the same order as those about Goldsmith and George Eliot. After all, what is more impressive than a good, sound, respectable truism? How much more restful it is than George Chesterton's mocking paradoxes. I fear that Disraeli was anticipating Chesterton and trying to be "bright" when he made Mr. Phoebus say, in *Lothair*: "Books are fatal, they are the curse of the human race. Nine-tenths of existing books are nonsense, and the clever books are the refutation of that

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\*"Lamb got up and, taking a candle, said, 'Sir, will you allow me to look at your phrenological development?'" Haydon's Diary, quoted in Ainger's "Lamb".

nonsense. The greatest misfortune that ever befel man, was the invention of printing." He may have been thinking only of Disraeli novels. It may be true, as Stevenson observed, that "books are good enough in their own way, but they are a mighty bloodless substitute for life," but I think he was only pretending a good deal. It is like saying that strawberries are a poor substitute for beef.

A certain vanity possesses the soul of the book-fancier. He loves to talk about his own books and to parade them with pride; but it is surely a harmless vanity. I do not boast of any of the distinguished volumes, prizes of the book-auction, but I enjoy the loitering about the shelves, even the inspection of the backs of the books, often unable to decide which one I shall take down for reading purposes. In the true lover of books, this habit of wandering about the shelves becomes inveterate. When Robert Southey's mind and memory failed him and after his power of comprehension had gone, he still maintained his habit of strolling in the library. "His dearly prized books were a pleasure to him almost to the end" writes his son, "and he would walk slowly around his library looking at them and taking them down mechanically." There is much pathos in this picture. It is a strange manifestation of human nature that many book-lovers do not like to have their treasures taken from the shelves by any but themselves. Whether it is because they fear a disarrangement of the order or on account of an apprehension of possible loss, it is not easy to tell; perhaps it is a feeling akin to the aversion which most Anglo-Saxon people have to being personally jostled by strangers. The same Southey was sensitive about having his books handled by a guest. As

is generally known, he had a large collection; the whole house at Keswick was filled with books, even the bedrooms and the stairways. Mr. T. J. Hogg tells us that he took out a volume one day as he was going downstairs with his host. "Southey looked at me" he adds, "as if he was displeased, so I put it back again instantly, and I never ventured to take down one of his books another time." Yet Southey was fond of selecting a book from the shelves and reading from it, allowing the favored friend to keep it as long as he pleased and turn over the leaves, if he, Southey, had taken it down himself. As far as my own little library is concerned, I am rejoiced in my inmost soul when a man exhibits interest enough in any one of my books to pull it away from its companions, provided that he does not draw it out by the top. My library is a place which I want to make the most of and to have my friends do likewise. As was said by John Fletcher.

"Give me leave  
To enjoy myself. That place that does contain  
My books, the best companions, is to me  
A glorious court, where hourly I converse  
With the old sages and philosophers."

In confidence, it is not so much the sages and philosophers, for they are apt to talk too long and tediously. Those of us who are strictly truthful derive much more comfort from the chat of less serious folk. Bacon and Locke, Sir William Hamilton and Doctor McCosh, are well enough when some one is looking at you, but a few of the French memoirs, or the best of the novels are better adapted to the promotion of private enjoyment.

The ideal library room, *meo jndice*, is long and

spacious, not too lofty, with the shelves low enough to permit of rambling without availing of a set of steps. It is not the sort of library which arouses poetic fervor or is perpetuated in pictures; not the stately hall to which Bulwer invites us when he tells us to

"Sit here and muse:—it is an antique room—  
High-roof'd, with casements, through whose purple  
pane  
Unwilling daylight stealing through the gloom,  
Comes like a fearful stranger,"

but that library is not at all suited to my taste. It may be well enough for poets, who muse more than they read, and whose abodes are not ordinarily in the nature of baronial halls, but for humbler men a moderately low ceiling, with no purple panes, but plenty of frank daylight pouring in generously and not stealing in furtively, is infinitely more desirable; and at night I want good electric lights and do not care to be compelled to grope about with a precarious and ineffective candle. Laurence Hutton's library at "Peep o' Day" in Princeton and some others I could mention, which do not give the impression that they are places of show but are delightful workshops, are far more agreeable to the real book-fancier. I confess a liking for Southey's methods, and my own books are scattered all over the home, gathered in every room except the butler's pantry from which by a stern domestic decree they are hopelessly excluded. There should be nothing to detract from the bookishness; possibly a few prints may be permitted, but never framed autographs. The autograph letter or manuscript is a tender thing, to be enshrined in a portfolio; to frame it is a desecration; I have some framed autographs myself. Every book-lover must be pleased



with the description of the library of Francis Parkman, in No. 50 Chestnut Street, Boston, where his printed books, several thousand, were stored, together with his large collection of manuscripts. "Up in that study" writes Mr. Sedgwick, "he used to sit all the winter months, in the company of his books and manuscripts, while the fire from the open stove flickered salutations to the shelves opposite, and the books stared back at trophies got forty years before on the Oregon trail, bow, arrows, shields, pipe of peace, hanging tamely on the wall. \* \* \* From other walls, Sir Walter Scott, a lion, and a cat looked gravely at Colonel Shaw, Colleoni, Dürer's Knight (a favorite), and at the facade of Notre Dame; but pictures had no great liberty of place, for the bookshelves spread themselves all over the room."\* The "open stove" grates a little on the nerves, but that may be forgotten. Parkman is one of the immortals, but to me he is especially dear because he was so fond of his cats. No library is absolutely perfect without an open fire—stoveless be it understood—and a fat, comfortable cat who will purr on pressure. Nothing but my abhorrence of all discursiveness prevents me from here indulging in a disquisition on cats; not Angoras, mind, nor the prize-winners at the show; just plain cats.

Sad and selfish as it may seem, there is not much pleasure in the tours about the shelves if one is accompanied by anybody. The excursions must needs be solitary, and the wanderer enjoys most his own unattended roamings; I like to have friends roam among the books, but I know better than to tag after

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\*Francis Parkman: H. D. Sedgwick: 252.

them as if I feared to trust them. No one need follow me in my little explorations; it is the great privilege of a reader to "skip" wisely whatever bores him. But for that blessed privilege I do not know what would become of us. How little do the babblers comprehend when they prattle about the folly of the book-lover who buys such numbers of books that he can never read! I know that I am going to utter mere twaddle, but I have lately discovered that, like him who talked prose without knowing it, I have been unconsciously talking and writing twaddle all my life. I believe that the phrase about "talking prose", commonly associated with the "Bourgeois Gentilhomme", really belongs to the Comte de Soissons.\* This choice bit of learning I am stealing from an old copy of the *Pall Mall Magazine*. Most of the pretended learning of twaddlers is derived from some such source.

Usually there is little that is attractive about an ancient law-book. These legal treatises are dreary things, whether new or old, and they repel the "gentle reader", for they are books only in form. The very modern ones are the most exasperating of all, when they tell you, for example, that parol testimony may not be admitted to vary the terms of a written instrument—fifty cases cited in note to sustain the profound proposition,—and add that sometimes it may—citing fifty more cases in another note, culled from the reports of all sorts of courts from the Supreme Court of the United States to the Supreme Court of Oklahoma. This confuses the casual peruser, who will worry through life oppressed by grave uncertainty as to what the law on that subject really is. The old

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\*Lettres de Sevigné (June 12. 1686).

books are better, and now and then we may detect in them a flavor other than that of decayed binding. Here is a little one, printed in London in 1659; a small 16 mo volume, of one hundred and eighty-seven pages only. Compare it with the three large volumes of "Cook on Corporations", in which are embalmed all the wisdom and lack of wisdom displayed by the courts in dealing with corporate problems, from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. Behold how slight a book it is; only the title is voluminous. It is by one William Shepheard, Sergeant at Law, and is entitled "Of Corporations, Fraternities and Guilds; or a Discourse wherein the Learning of the Law touching Bodies-Politique is unfolded, showing the Use and Necessity of that Invention, the Antiquity, various Kinds, Order and Government of the same." It is dedicated to 'his dear countrymen' and the learned author—he of the "Touchstone"—says:

"The Sovereignty which is placed in Man over the rest of the Creatures is derived from the sole advantage of his Reason, for in Corporal power he is much inferior to many. The Excellency of Reason consists in fitting Laws and Politics for our better Government, and the best of Politics is that Invention whereby men have bin fram'd into Corporations, Guilds or Fraternities, for, whereas other Laws are adapted, but for the benefit of Individuals, this has a more noble end, and, if it were possible, would preserve the Species; and although Art cannot altogether arrive at the perfection of Nature, yet has it in this shew'd a fair Adumbration, and given to man the nearest resemblances of his maker: that is, to be in a sort immortal."

In our day we are not given to the belief that corporations are quite as divine as all that; but, to be

fair, the sapient Shepherd was not referring to corporations as we know them now. The corporations of the time of which he wrote were mere infants. Yet he does add something which shows that certain ideas of our own generation are by no means original among us. "These things" he remarks, "are to be known: that all By-laws by them made against the Liberty and Freedom of the People, as, to forbid or Restrain Trade, Impose Taxes or Burdens of payment on the people, where the Law doth not impose them; to bind a man's Inheritance, to restrain men from suing in what Court they please, or to enhance the prizes of Commodities to the hurt of the publick, and private advantage of the place, are void." So say we all of us. He does not assume to declare that it is unlawful for a corporation to make necessities cheaper: oil, for example, or sugar. That would have been a strange thing for his ancient mind; and I am glad he spells "people" with a capital P. It was prophetic. So much for the gentle Shepherd. I have quoted him to show how reverently they regarded corporations in the seventeenth century. What was one century's meat is another century's poison.

A thin, rather shabby little volume, in a binding of faded brown boards, without a word to indicate, as far as the cover is concerned, the nature of the contents or the name of the author, ranks among the rare, for it contains the poems of George Bancroft. The historian, after graduating from Harvard in 1819, went to Europe as soon as he had gained his diploma, returning in 1822 with the Göttingen degree of Doctor of Philosophy and the idea that he was a poet. He was in his twenty-third year when this booklet of only seventy-seven pages appeared, bear-

ing the imprint "Cambridge: from the University Press: Hillard and Metcalf: 1823." It is dedicated "to the President of Harvard University, the author's early benefactor and friend." This President was Dr. John Thornton Kirkland. The themes of the poems are European, and the verse is dull, formal and stilted. It is said that Bancroft in after days endeavored to suppress the book and that a large number of copies were burned at the house of Prescott. Donald G. Mitchell calls attention to the fact that the copy in the Lenox Library "shows numerous interlineations and emendations in the script of the author, as if he had once intended a revised reprint." He was wise to abandon the intention, if he ever had it. Whatever talent he may have possessed, it was not poetic. Bancroft was a politician, and with all his affectations and highly developed self-appreciation, was a man of distinction, a stately figure in his later years. The History, written in the old-fashioned way, shows great research and conscientious labor, but, after all, it is practically obsolete although the latest edition was published only a quarter of a century ago. I question whether it is read now to any greater extent than are the histories of Hume and Smollett. He loved sonorous sentences and solemn platitudes. It is difficult to imagine a modern historian adorning his tale with such a purple patch as this, for example:

"What though thought is invisible and even when effective, seems as transient as the wind that raised the cloud? It is yet free and indestructible; can as little be bound in chains as the aspiring flame, and when once generated, takes Eternity for its Guardian."\*

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\*History, I, 112.

It might be said that his prose was poetic and his poetry prosy. He begins a "Farewell to Switzerland" thus:

"Land of the brave! land of the free! farewell!  
Thee nature moulded in her wildest mood,  
*Scooped the deep glen*, and bade the mountains swell  
O'er the dark belt of arrow tannen wood."

After this exhibition of scooping Nature, we encounter a stanza which cannot be surpassed, I think, in the records of literature.

"With my own hands 'twas sweet to climb the crag,  
Upborne and nourished by the mountain air,  
While the lean mules would far behind me lag,  
The fainting sons of indolence that bear."

The spectacle of Mr. Bancroft, climbing a crag by his hands, unsupported by legs but sustained by air, followed by a number of emaciated mules and several fainting "molly-coddles" would certainly have aroused deep and soul-stirring emotions in the bosom of the beholders.

Is it surprising that when years had brought wisdom, he endeavored to cancel the edition? I was on the point of saying that these poems were not much worse than those which Americans usually produced in the early part of the nineteenth century; but, on reflection, I will not go as far as that: nothing was ever quite as bad, unless it may be the work of Alfred Austin, of our own time and in another land than ours.

Yet for this book I paid a sum which would have purchased for me several well-bound sets of the six volume History. I have called it "rare"; and in one sense it is a "rarity", although it is not one upon

which a learned book-expert would confer that title. "It is hardly necessary" Mr. Powell writes in his *Excursions in Libraria*, "to observe that as the mere unfrequent occurrence of a phenomenon is no index of its importance, so the fact that a particular book, or any other given chattel, is seldom to be seen is no evidence of its intrinsic value—should in fact be rather the reverse, proportionally to our belief in the intelligence of mankind, although the rarity of a book, again, must be distinguished from the difficulty of obtaining it"; and he adds, quoting from the *Axiomata Specialia* prefixed to Vogt's *Catalogus Historico-Criticus Librorum Rariorum*, that rarity is by itself no proof of value, some of the worst and some of the most worthless books being the most difficult to procure. Strictly speaking, the record of the early indiscretion of Bancroft, historian and cabinet minister, is a "curiosity" rather than a "rarity" in the peculiar "lingo" of the bibliophile.

In wandering from shelf to shelf we find our minds straying also in a pleasant, aimless way; and the copy of Boaden's edition of Garrick's Correspondence recalls to our thoughts

"The laughter-loving dame,  
A matchless actress, Clive her name"

the energetic Kitty, Garrick's "Pivey", who used to grow angry with the great David and when he offended her, as he frequently did, "would drive him about the house like a terrier after a rat, and abuse him to his face, till he was completely dumfounded." In one of those modern compilations of biography which seem to be so popular in England, and which, although not always absolutely trustworthy, are cer-

tainly quite entertaining, we find an example of what some one calls "the evolution of the *bon mot*." In a sketch of John Hay published in *Putnam's Magazine* for June, 1909, the tale is told that the brilliant Secretary, who had been the victim of a faithless reporter, was applied to by the same man for certain information, not for publication. When Hay demurred, the reporter said, "I would not violate your confidence for the world". "Not for the *World*, perhaps," said Hay, "but you did for the *Journal*".

The records show that the substance of this merry jest is upwards of a hundred and fifty years old. In 1753 Horace Walpole sent to a friend a copy of Topham's paper, *The World*, in which was an article supposed to reflect upon himself, saying: "I met Mrs. Clive two nights ago, and told her I had been in the meadows, but would walk there no more, for there was all the world. 'Well', says she, 'and don't you like the *World*? I hear it was very clever last Thursday.' "\*"

Occupying places not far from the customary habitat of the "Comedy Queens" are the two volumes of the English edition of "Mrs. Brookfield and Her Circle" which was greeted with such loud acclaims of praise when it appeared a few years ago, but which I have the bad taste to dislike exceedingly. Such a collection of pure bibble-babble is seldom to be met in the literature of our language. Thackeray's letters cannot escape being of interest, although most of these are disappointing; really the pretty portrait of Jane Octavia Brookfield, prefixed to the first volume, is the best thing in it. But William Henry Brookfield!

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\*Fyvie's Comedy Queens of the Georgian Era, 97-98.



No wonder that Jane flirted wildly with the Great Snob! Why in the name of the deity who protects us against bores, if any such deity exists, were William Henry's silly epistles inflicted upon us? I open at random and find such glorious passages as these:

"On Thursday morning next—oh, where is Caroline? I breakfast—where???? At the Burlington? No. At Lord Lansdowne's? Pooh! With JNO? Pshaw! Upon Perigord pie and *omelette aux fines herbes*? Du tout! With Lord John? Wheu! Bishop of St. David's? Never! With Prince Albert? Pish! With *Rogers*? I can hardly frame my guessing lips to utter—Yes! I hope he will 'behave well'—that is that he will not pick his teeth with my fork, etc."

The man was always chattering about his breakfast. Who, pray, cares a jot about his breakfast? There is an unpleasant savor of vulgarity in his reference to Rogers, scarcely becoming in a clergyman of the church of England and the husband of Jane Octavia.

There are revelations of Thackeray which confirm the impression that the eminent novelist was not always considerate of other and minor literary lights. We all know of his cruel and heartless treatment of poor Edmund Yates; and notwithstanding his somewhat intimate association with William Harrison Ainsworth, he and his little circle of worshippers take no pains to hide their contempt for the lesser novelist who deserved better treatment and while he was not as great as Thackeray was a gentleman and had many more generous qualities. We find Thackeray writing from Paris to Mrs. Brookfield in 1849:—"W. H. Ainsworth is here. We dined next each other at the 3 Frères yesterday, and rather fraternized. He

showed a friendly disposition I thought, and a desire to forgive me my success, but beyond a good-humoured acquiescence in his good will, I don't care." The devoted female, falling in with the mood of her distinguished friend, answers a few days later: "I am amused at your having Mr. Ainsworth at Paris—he was at Venice when we were there, and was always called 'Tiger or Tig' by Uncle Hallam, who did not know who he was till he came up one day and proffered the hand of fellowship to Uncle H. on the ground of their mutual authorship. 'I am Mr. Ainsworth', as if he had been Herschel at the least, and we sat together in the Place St. Mark, eating ices and discussing you, and I recollect saying you had 'such an affectionate nature', which Mr. Ainsworth made me repeat about 3 times, pretending not to hear, and I felt I had thrown pearls before swine and been unnecessarily frank in my praise of you, and began to think he might very possibly have a feeling of jealousy about you as an author, tho' it would be ludicrously presumptuous in him—as of all detestable writing, his is the worst, I think." One scarcely knows what most to admire in this effusion—the delightful humor of "Uncle Hallam", or the scorn of the lady because the poor creature said "I am Mr. Ainsworth"—rather a natural remark under the circumstances. As nobody 'knew who he was' when he violated all the canons of British propriety by presuming to speak to some of his countrymen, he seems to have been justified in giving his real name and not a fictitious one. When Mrs. Brookfield made her profound remark about Thackeray's "affectionate nature", we may not wonder that Ainsworth, who knew well that Thackeray had nothing of the sort, asked to have it repeated.

He was enjoying a little fun under disadvantageous conditions. At all events, however greatly Mrs. Brookfield may have despised him, the author of "Jack Sheppard" had no reason to be ashamed of the record of *his* private life.

The flood of biographies which flows from our presses contains few better works than the *Life of Thomas Bailey Aldrich*, by Mr. Greenslet, who is a model for his kind, never wearying the reader by the customary padding, but making us wish that there was more. An agreeable and successful career was that of Aldrich, a true artist, who kept his youth wonderfully. There is not a dull line in his letters, and his literary judgments are clear, just and positive. Delicious are his remarks to the telescope-man on the Common about "seeing Venus naked to the visible eye" and to the Hibernian election-officer in Boston who asked him "Can you read the Declaration of Independence"—"I can, sor; Whin in the coorse of human evints", etc. He touches a chord of sympathy when he speaks of some of Carlyle's labored scoldings as "the incoherent and explosive pages of the sour Thomas", and it is refreshing to read his letter to Woodberry in 1892 when he says of his countrymen: "They were a promising race, they had such good chances, but their politicians *would* coddle the worst elements for votes, and the newspapers *would* appeal to the slums for readers"; and he quotes Kipling on the government of New York—"a despotism of the alien, by the alien, for the alien, tempered with occasional insurrections of decent folk." A nation rejoicing in its Roosevelts, its Bryans and its Hearsts may not relish such mollycoddish sentiments, but

down in the hearts of thoughtful men dwells a conviction that Aldrich was not far wrong. My good friend of the *Hartford Courant* did me the honor to say not long ago that I was "a little insane" and that I am "never so sure and never so offensive as when I am wrong." That pleases me greatly. As the American says in the *Boy at Mugby*, "I larf."

In a very accessible corner of the library, where are assembled some of the especial favorites—an Andrew Lang or two, some small volumes of Lowell, a book of Donald Mitchell, some of Brownell's studies, and examples of the charming art of Henry Van Dyke, Bliss Perry, and the gentle Doctor Crothers—is the small collection of essays which Woodrow Wilson called "Mere Literature" before he became a particularly polemical President of an excellent University. A year or so ago in a speech delivered before an array of attentive bankers, he said that he had been impressed by the fact that formerly, after-dinner speakers never ventured to say anything very serious, but felt obliged to pursue the jocose: while now, the people expected more serious things. It may be so, and the endless stream of feeble stories has become unwelcome, but I doubt whether, after dinner, we are fit for anything but pleasant discourses about ordinary topics, or in a state of mind appropriate for the absorption of lectures on subjects of grave moment. We can dispense with the anecdotes, although I observe that Doctor Wilson usually has at least three that are well worth listening to, and they are always administered early in the discourse in order to sugar the pill of profundity. There is ground for the belief that a good many of us pretend that we want solid instruction after dinner without being really very hungry for it. I recall

the puzzled expression of a jovial throng last winter when an excellent speaker and eminent citizen talked about the hook-worm and the boll-weevil: and I saw the house suddenly emptied on a warm summer afternoon when a dear old doctor of divinity began by saying to a perspiring audience of alumni: "I will now call your attention to a few of the by-products of Christianity in Siam." The truth is that the after-dinner speech, whether grave or gay, pleases the hearers most when it is condensed within the limits of reasonable brevity.

We are straying from the shelves to the dinner-table. I plead guilty to the charge of "rambling along with the irresponsibility and indirection of a child playing hookey," preferred by my friend of the *Hartford Courant*, who called me "an ass", which caused me to exclaim with the amiable Hebrew who was denounced as "a thief, a liar and a scoundrel,"—"But outside of that, I'm all right, aind I?"

This half red-morocco bound post-octavo bearing the title "The Life and Remains of Douglas Jerrold" by his son Blanchard Jerrold,—a presentation copy to Charles Dickens with an inscription mentioning it as "the first perfect copy"—is a reminder of a witty and attractive personality, whose memory as an author is vanishing despite "Black Eyed Susan" and "Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures", and remains chiefly because of spoken jests, many of them mythical; but its value to me comes especially from its association with a man of fine qualities and of a noble nature, from whose library it passed into my possession. The impulse comes to me to speak of a life-long friend, well-known at the bar of New York, with whom no one ever came into personal relations without respect and

admiration. Not long after his lamented death, his books, gathered with an affectionate and discriminating judgment, were sold at auction. Knowing how he loved them, it gave me a shock of pain to have them exposed at public vendue. The catalogue of them did not afford many examples of the ancient lumber of the bibliophile—those treasures dear to old Dibdin and sacred to the book-loving antiquary, revered by the few, but not as comfortable to live with as some of the moderns. Palæontological relics have their value, but the human interest of Thackeray, of Dickens, of Leigh Hunt, of Walter Scott, and of his most dissimilar fellow novelist, Tobias Smollett, is more attractive to those who lay no claim to the title of expert. We cannot all be Charles Lambs, running home at night in ecstasy because we happen to have a darling Beaumont and Fletcher folio under our arms; nor can we all be Pierpont Morgans with Caxtons crowding our shelves. My friend, modest almost to diffidence, was not a collector of Caxtons or of folio Shakespeares, and he made no pretense of familiar acquaintance with early examples although he knew more about them than most people do. He gathered around him only what appealed most strongly to his individual taste; and in that he was of my own sort, although I follow him *haud passibus aequis*. In the catalogue of his possessions the lover of books dwells fondly on the long list of Thackerays, embracing the *Flore et Zephyre* and the *Second Funeral of Napoleon*; the Dickens items; the first editions of Leigh Hunt, unjustly remembered as the original of Harold Skimpole; the Cruikshanks, recalling the “crank” who thought he wrote *Oliver Twist* and was sure that he created Ainsworth; the Scotts, with their treasures of

autograph letters, which particularly amuse me because their owner used to make fun of my autographs; the tall copy of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, reminding us of the man who said that he preferred it in the original binding; the Swifts, the early Tennysons, and also the Surtees and the memoirs of that reckless "old sport", John Mytton, who would be impossible in this century and who ought to have been impossible in any civilized country. It is not uninteresting to note that in the translation of the *Memoirs of Casanova* there are "several sections loose". In short, the catalogue described the collection made by a man of culture, not because of a fondness for some special subject or of a devotion to the accumulation of rarities merely on account of their rareness, but because they pleased him. To the auction block we must all come at last, I fancy; such is the fate of the collections we spend our lives in making. We may only hope that some of the things we loved may pass into the hands of those who will be as fond of them as we were, and who may find added worth in them because they were once the objects of our affection.

But the prospect of the inevitable dispersion of the assembled companions does not sadden my little tours about the book-shelves.

"All round my room my silent servants wait—  
My friends in every season, bright and dim:  
Angels and seraphim  
Come down and murmur to me,  
Sweet and low  
And spirits of the skies all come and go  
Early and late."





## THE QUEST OF THE AUTOGRAPH

SOME years ago a gentleman who described himself as an "autographomaniac" and who manifestly possessed what Sir William Gilbert called "a pretty taste for paradox," took up the cudgels in the *Independent*, on behalf of the unpopular persons who "write for autographs," and while he confessed that his pursuit was "shocking," he was brave enough to declare that he was "willing to take the consequences." I fully agree with him in his characterization of the nefarious habit, and am willing to submit his case, as he makes it, to the tribunal of public opinion, without argument on behalf of the respondent. He is welcome to the consequences, whatever they may be. I suspect that his screed was not meant to be taken very seriously, and that he was emulating DeQuincey's treatise on "Murder as a Fine Art." He has incited me to utter a few more words about autographs, because he did me the honor to say: "Such distinguished collectors as Dr. G. Birkbeck Hill and Mr. Adrian Joline turn up their noses at my kind," and he made some jocose but unworthy reflections upon my method of cultivating my hobby. He betrayed himself as not a real collector, as only an amateur, who had not approached the shrine with proper reverence and preparation. Dr. Birkbeck Hill was in his life time a scholar and a clever literary man, devoted to the altar of Samuel Johnson, and he wrote a pleasant book called "Talks About Autographs," but he was not a collector in the

ordinary acceptation of the term, and I am by no means a "distinguished collector," although I thank the Maniac for conferring upon me a title as honorable as it is undeserved. What amused me most about the ravings of the Maniac was the assertion that collectors of my own way of thinking buy at auctions and through dealers "dry-as-dust letters written for the most part by men long since gone to their fathers," while the "pestilential nuisances," to borrow another Gilbertian phrase, confine their attention to the autographs of the living, and especially prize the peppery responses they receive from persecuted greatness. It reminds us of the ancient fable about the Oxford guide who exhibited to his party the eminent Jowett, the noted head of Balliol College, wrathful and indignant at the assault upon his study window, and of the individual whose favorite boast was that he had been soundly kicked by a Royal Duke. "Such and so various are the tastes of men."

Thomas Bailey Aldrich, in his Ponkapog Papers, speaks of "the average autograph hunter with his purposeless insistence"—"the innumerable unknown who 'collect' autographs as they would postage stamps, with no interest in the matter beyond the desire to accumulate as many as possible." He relates a story of a fellow-author (I suspect it was Aldrich himself) who was asked by a bereaved widow and mother to copy for her some lines from his poem on the death of a child, to comfort her for the loss of her little girl. Two months later he found his manuscript with a neat price attached to it in a second-hand book shop. I am well pleased to be excluded from that class of autograph hunters and I do not envy the Maniac who cares to array himself in such unworthy company.

We occasionally buy the letters of the living, and some years ago the newspapers were quite stirred up by the sale of a letter from the late Edward VII.—then Prince of Wales—to Mrs. Langtry, for the respectable price of ninety dollars. Even the journals which make pretensions to decency and good taste broke forth in clamor, one of them sneering at the alleged value of collecting as a preservative of literary and historical treasures, and another announcing with oracular finality that the incident proved the “snob-bishness” of collectors. All these deductions based upon insufficient premises are the offspring of imperfect intelligence and the evidence of that tendency to hasty judgment which marks the utterances of the uninformed and unreflecting person. The chances are that the bidder was unconsciously competing, through an agent, with some rival who had given an order without a limit; or that the owner was making what is known in Wall Street as a “washed sale” in order to establish a market price for a number of similar specimens of royal autography. I heard a rumor that a faithless maid of the famous actress stole a quantity of letters from her mistress, and that the vendee was endeavoring to “realize” on the ill-gotten booty. But whether these conjectures are well founded or not, it is certainly quite easy to understand why a letter from so distinguished a personage, to a noted beauty, an ornament of the stage, should possess an interest for a collector wholly apart from any element of snobbishness. Nothing is more delusive than the auction price of books or autographs. Long ago at a Philadelphia sale, a lot of Trumbull’s sketches for his great picture of the Battle of Princeton was offered, and I instructed an agent to buy one or more, fixing a limit

on the whole or any part. It happened that my friend Junius—not the author of the famous letters—wanted those very sketches, and as a result of my uninformed and unwise competition, they cost him about \$800 although they would have been dear at half that sum. This circumstance convinced me that it is a mistake to estimate real value by casual auction prices.

Before me lies a faded pamphlet, a copy of "The Athenaeum, or Spirit of the English Magazines," published in Boston, on January 1, 1828, containing articles unblushingly appropriated from British periodicals in the days when our own were feeble, few and far between. Among them is one on "Autographs," beginning with these words: "In direct opposition to the established maxim, 'A living dog is better than a dead lion,' the autograph of a dead man is better than that of a living one; indeed, the longer a man has been dead, the better the autograph." The genial Maniac—who is not as mad as he pretends to be—may whimsically dispute this proposition, but it is an eternal verity, far beyond the power of any of us to controvert successfully. As with the pictures of the famous artists, the price increases when the source of supply is cut off, and the value is measured by the price.

I am glad to have my friend draw upon himself the lightning of great men's wrath, because some day the thunderers will be dead, and his specimens, heroically gathered in defiance of their indignant bolts, will be lovingly cherished by disciples of the cult whose coat-tails are immune to the kicks of enraged statesmen and authors. It is true, nevertheless, that mere "autographs by request" are of little value in the eyes of a wise collector. Even when they have the

spice of hearty resentment they are by no means precious.

In a curiously unappreciative paper concerning the beloved Autocrat, Oliver Wendell Holmes, included in "Adventures Among Books," Andrew Lang says of the delectable Doctor: "He was even too good-humored, and the worst thing I have ever heard of him is that he could not say 'no' to an autograph hunter." Surely Lang intended this accusation to be a gentle commendation, but I fear the casual reader will fail to detect the subtle humor of it. Treating it seriously, for the casual reader's sake, I own that I am unable to find in the amiable weakness any good reason for criticism or for censure. I admit that if these pests of great men had made demands upon the Doctor's purse they would have been seeking only trash, according to the dictum of the author of "Othello"—whoever that author may have been—and that by asking for his autograph they were endeavoring to take from him his good name, but only as inscribed upon a sheet of paper and by no means making him "poor indeed." I am convinced that the sneers and cavils of those who pronounce harsh judgments upon the seekers of autographs are only the manifestations of ignorant illiberality like the old complaints which are uttered from time to time about uncut books, deckel edges, first editions, and dainty bindings. These denunciations resemble the outcries of those who possess not the fragrant automobile against the plutocrat who monopolizes our highways. When we are not of his class, we scold him bitterly, but if we come to that state of affluence which enables us to join his ranks, we quickly assume his autocratic demeanor towards those who merely cumber the earth with their

slow-moving vehicles, horse-drawn, crawling along without benefit of gasoline or electricity. Probably the Merovingian kings with their ox-chariots were fiercely hostile to the swift pacer or trotter. "It all depends," as they say in the Mikado. It may be inferred that I do not love the motor-car. If I need rapidity of motion, I prefer to travel in the cab of an engine on the Twentieth Century Limited. I do not dote upon polo or bridge, but I keep silent about them because I know that my neighbor's tastes may be lawfully indulged whatever I may think about them or whether or not they accord with mine. As the pleasant writer of *The Upton Letters* remarks, "It does not matter how much people disagree, if they will only admit in their minds that every one has a right to a point of view, and that their own does not necessarily rule out all others." I am disposed to love my neighbors as myself, as good people are instructed to do, but the task is often arduous. I ask only that he will patiently indulge me in my fondness for my favorite books and my pet autographs, which cannot possibly interfere with his personal comfort as his automobile does with mine.

Almost everyone who reads and who really thinks, has a pleasure in looking at autographs. In the great library of the Vatican I have observed the eager interest with which the visitors gaze upon the handwriting of Henry VIII, of Anne Boleyn, and of Martin Luther,—oddly preserved in a place where one would scarcely expect to find it. The throngs who contemplate the wonderful collections in the British Museum testify to the fascination which clings to the actual pen-tracings made by men and women of historic fame, and the multitudes who visit the Library

of Congress in Washington linger over the glass-covered cabinets where the letters of our Presidents, as well as of many other noted public men, grouped with their portraits, are admirably arranged for inspection by the curious.

The interest of many examples in collections is purely autographic—that is to say, the simple fact that the lines were inscribed by the particular person is the chief stimulant of the imagination. It may be merely a formal document to which only the signature of Queen Elizabeth, or of Napoleon, or of Charles I. of England, or of Washington is affixed; it may be nothing but a line or two penned by Samuel Johnson, or by Dean Swift, by William Pitt or by Mazarin or Richelieu,—the effect is produced, and no one who has a spark of fancy can fail to gain some pleasure from the contemplation, for example, of an official paper bearing the names of Charles II. and Samuel Pepys, or a parchment scroll subscribed by Oliver Cromwell. It is a simple matter to advance from this point to the delight of reading original letters and manuscripts of intrinsic merit, and with the charm of reading comes the joy of possession. It is a joy whose nature is absolutely different from that which a bibliophile experiences when he gloats over his precious “first edition,” or hugs to his bosom his invaluable Caxton. Sometimes there may be a sense of pride in the ownership of a thing which no one else may own, and we may detect the note of triumph sounded in the boast occasionally uttered by even the most modest of my brethren—“No specimen, sir, in the British Museum.” But the real delight is in the feeling of companionship with the man who wrote the letter or the book. The true autograph hunter

may live with Lamb, talk with Macaulay, listen to Dr. Johnson, gaze upon Thackeray at the Garrick, and stand in the presence of Pope and Dryden. If these are the results of devotion to "musty, dusty stuff," then let my amiable lunatic of Madison, Wisconsin, in the immortal words of Patrick Henry, "make the most of it."

It is strange that the autograph collector is scorned and condemned by the majority. Perhaps it is because most men do not reflect about that which is of no immediate interest to them. It may be that it arises from the resentment which many are apt to feel towards the few who are devoted to some rather exclusive pursuit: for the concrete autograph itself usually arouses some attention among intelligent persons. I have an idea that the depreciation comes from a certain affectation on the part of great men, and the shallow acquiescence of the careless newspaper scribblers in what they deem to be the popular judgment. Like the early Christians, we survive our persecutions. We know that popularity is a poor test of merit. It would be a sad day if collecting should ever become popular, as golfing is and as "bicycling" was. I have a keen sympathy for the English schoolmaster who said that golf and drink were the two curses of the country.

But whatever may be the cause, it is undeniably true that plain persons, and even some who consider themselves far superior to plain persons, are filled with unholy glee whenever they find an opportunity to utter expressions of contempt and derision concerning the pursuit of the autograph. These expressions are in most cases coupled with sarcastic allusions to postage stamps, and every man appears to believe that the idea of associating a stamp collector and an autograph collector is



entirely original with him. I have amused myself from time to time by recounting some of these censorious observations and in trying to fathom the mystery of their genesis, while venturing mildly to demonstrate their injustice. I confess that one of the latest examples which has been brought to my attention has given me more pain and surprise than any of its predecessors. We have been assailed and vilified in the house of our friends, and if one may be permitted to use a trite expression, attributed to a personage whose autograph would adorn even the British Museum, one may well cry out, "*Et tu Brute!*"

No collector deserving the name is unaware of the proud eminence which has always been awarded to the Reverend William Buel Sprague, D. D., the grandfather of us all, who from his Albanian eyrie dispensed autograph letters throughout the land, and with delightful liberality shared his stores with his brethren of the cult, while reserving for his own a splendid mass of rare Americana. The enthusiastic Draper says of him that he "fills a distinguished and unique place in the history of American literature and is accorded on all hands the highest rank among the early American autograph collectors." Was he not the man who furnished to Doctor Emmet that peerless Lynch letter, the envy of all collectors? I have heard rumors of another letter, said to belong to Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan, but I have my doubts. From the description of it given to me, I think it must be the one which is printed in Draper's "Autographic Collections" and is shown to be a forgery. I had acquired a reverence for the worthy Doctor equal to that with which the devotee of Christian Science regards Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, or to that which we are assured on unimpeachable authority, the

heathen exhibits when he bows down to wood and stone. But a kind Bostonian, actuated by generous impulse, although perhaps not wholly lacking in sarcastic humor, once gave me a book called "Visits to European Celebrities, by William B. Sprague, D. D.," from the library of Governor Charles H. Bell, of New Hampshire, which contains an original autograph letter of the excellent dominie, written undoubtedly to Bell himself. The astonishing tenor of this letter leads me to present it in all its hideousness:

"Albany, 18 April, '68.

"My dear sir: Your kind letter has set me to looking through a part of my collection to see if I could find duplicates of any of your names on your list, and the result, as you will see, is a very meagre contribution. Such as they are, however, you are entirely welcome to them. As a friend, I would advise you to have as little to do with an autograph collector as possible, for though there are some honorable exceptions, yet, as a class, I think they rank A No. 1 in point of meanness.

"Very truly yours,

W. B. SPRAGUE."

I acknowledge that on the first perusal of this remarkable epistle I was stricken with the sort of stupor which used to overcome the Virgilian hero when he succumbed to circumstances and "*vox faucibus haesit*." After having battled with all the indictments found by the grand jury of the public, the charges of covetousness, selfishness, impudence, silliness, uselessness, born of the plenitude of popular misinformation, and after what I had vainly deemed my triumphant pleas to those indictments, sustained, as I fondly imagined, by the courts of highest jurisdiction—to be confronted now with an accusation based upon the shameless confession

of a co-conspirator, the shocking admissions of a *particeps criminis*, the State's evidence of a faithless associate, made my heart fail me for a moment, and my soul to grow sad as I said, "but it was even thou, my companion, my guide, and mine own familiar friend!" Figuratively, Doctor Sprague was all of that to me, although I must own that his birth antedates mine a little over half a century, and I never had the good fortune to enjoy his actual personal acquaintance. It would not have astonished me more had Doctor Emmet denounced the Signers, Gratz or Greenough sneered at Continental Congressmen, or Benjamin proclaimed the folly of buying autographs in the market. If Mr. Hearst had nominated Mayor Gaynor for the Presidency, or if the New York Tribune had blazed out in condemnation of protective tariffs, they would not have given me as serious a shock as did this utterance of the venerable Sprague. But there lies the record, and with an effort I summon what remains of my intellect in order to apply myself to a calm consideration of this unexpected situation.

We are at a disadvantage at the outset, because the evidence upon which the charge is based has not been submitted to our scrutiny. A good deal of the merit of a cause depends upon the nature of the proof presented in its support. It is not difficult to formulate a complaint, but it is sometimes hard to bring the witnesses up to the necessities of the case. I once had a client who would come to the office just before the trial of his action and, rubbing his hands in a genial way, cry out, "Well, what do you want us to swear to?" But he was an exception, for they generally exhibit a strong disinclination to testify to the point and make strenuous efforts to evade it. It would have been a pleasure to question the frank and honest Doctor, but unfortunately

he is beyond the reach of cross-examination. What tales he might have unfolded! Alas, they are buried with him. We may only analyze the accusation and endeavor to determine its justice or its injustice by methods which are not permitted by the rules of evidence.

Meanness means the mean. The mean is the low-minded, base, wanting in integrity, poor, pitiful, stingy. Meanness is a low state, poorness, want of dignity or excellence, want of liberality. I must be right about this, for I am quoting from a standard dictionary. On behalf of the fraternity of autograph collectors, and without a fee—unprofessional as it may seem—I enter a plea of “not guilty.” When Doctor Sprague penned those fatal lines, he was suffering no doubt from some experience of a painful nature with a pseudo-collector, a mere Jeremy Diddler of a collector, who being aware of his sweet simplicity of character and willingness to help the aspiring neophyte, had attempted to impose upon him for purposes of sordid gain.

One great difficulty which a reasonable man encounters in the course of his life—and I consider myself the only truly reasonable man of my acquaintance—is the unfortunate tendency of other men to indulge in generalizations. Almost all generalizations are dangerous, fallacious, and fraught with violations of the rules of logic. Journeying in Canada some years ago in the society of an eminent author of our day, we met a lad who suffered from a bad cough, and some hours later we came upon another boy who was laboring under a similar affliction. My literary friend thereupon delivered himself of this solemn judgment: “All small boys in Canada have coughs.” We are familiar with the story of the Englishman visiting Germany for the

first time, and after a single hour's experience in a railway carriage, noting in his diary: "All Germans have red hair and are named Muller." The Psalmist said in his haste that all men are liars. I can not help thinking that Doctor Sprague said what he did about collectors in like haste and with less justification, because all men, except George Washington and Mark Twain, have lied at times, whereas I am confident that collectors, as a rule, are not mean and that the mean ones are the dishonorable exceptions. But although I hold a brief for the defence, I intend to be fair. I am informed that no less a person than Doctor Thomas Addis Emmet himself—*clarum et venerabile nomen*—asserts that Sprague was well within the truth when he stigmatized collectors in the manner set forth in the Bell letter; that he was victimized right and left by people who never compensated him for material that he sold to them; and that he declared that Emmet and the late T. Bailey Myers were the only customers who paid him.

It must be remembered, however, that Doctor Sprague was not a dealer, a business man, with a tangible shop and a real, perceptible price-list. Perhaps the recipients of his autographic contributions thought that they were donees and not vendees. Diffident persons, strangers, might well hesitate about offering filthy lucre to a learned Doctor of Divinity, unless he does as merchants do and gives notice that he is in trade, by judicious advertisement. I doubt whether he mentioned prices or sent a bill, but if he expected payment he should have resorted to the ordinary methods of business.

Assuming that Doctor Sprague has testified that Emmet and Myers were the only persons who constitute the "honorable exceptions" referred to in the

Bell letter, let us subject the complainant to such cross-examination as under our severe difficulties, we may resort to in aid of our clients. Doctor, did you ever know one Israel W. Tefft, of Georgia? Is it not a fact that when you visited him in 1830 he had only about thirty letters of Signers, but that he offered to give you such as you needed—and you took them? Did he not in 1845 present to you one or more Lynch signatures to enable you to complete your additional sets? If the Doctor's devoted admirer, Lyman C. Draper, is telling the truth, the answers must be "yes." Now, I show you a letter in your unmistakable chi-rography, dated at Flushing, October 16, 1874, and call your attention to this language: "When I began to collect autographs, I was the intimate friend and correspondent of Robert Gilmour of your city, the first collector I ever knew, but it is long since his collection was sold and I suppose scattered to the winds." I will ask you now whether you were not mistaken in your statement to Doctor Emmet, and if the names of Tefft and of Gilmour—your "intimate friend"—should not be excluded from the category of "mean collectors," thus doubling the number of your "honorable exceptions?"

I think I will not call any witnesses, because I have none excepting myself. Truly, my own experience has led me to a conclusion quite different from that which the dear old Doctor announced so dogmatically. That experience, I admit, has not been extensive, but there has been a great change in autograph hunting since the Doctor's day and generation. Autograph collecting in this country was then in its infancy; the collecting of to-day bears a similar relation to that of fifty years ago which the telephone bears to the post

or the Chicago Flyer to the deliberate trains of the old Camden and Amboy. It has been my good fortune to find the genuine collectors fair-minded, generous, and sympathetic, and I have often profited by their generosity. I hesitate to "name names" but perhaps I may be pardoned for mentioning the late Elliot Danforth, and also the scholarly Boston lawyer, Charles P. Greenough. Laurence Hutton too, was liberal and I am grateful to him, although I do not accept his peculiar views about autographs. As there is a "science falsely so called," there are collectors who do not deserve the honorable name; and I am sure that if I could summon the shade of Sprague to this mortal sphere he would readily admit that his incautious assertion was the result of some temporary obscuration of the mind and that he did not really mean it.

Returning to the subject of the joys of the collector, we cannot forget that no less famous a man than Nathaniel Hawthorne has recorded his views. When he had before him a book containing letters of statesmen and soldiers of the Revolution, he put himself in the noble order of autograph lovers. I cite his very words, because, much to my astonishment, I find that he expresses my own feelings much more eloquently than I am able to do. "They are profitable reading on a quiet afternoon," he said, "and in a mode withdrawn from too intimate relation with the present time, so that we can glide backward some three-quarters of a century, and surround ourselves with the ominous sublimity of circumstances that then frowned upon the writers. \* \* \* They are magic scrolls, if read in the right spirit. The roll of the drum and the fanfare of the trumpet is latent in some of them;

and in others, an echo of the oratory that resounded in the old halls of the Continental Congress, at Philadelphia; or the words may come to us as with the living utterance of one of those illustrious men, speaking face to face, in friendly communion. Strange, that the mere identity of paper and ink should be so powerful. The same thoughts might look cold and ineffectual in a printed book. Human nature craves a certain materialism, and clings pertinaciously to what is tangible, as if that were of more importance than the spirit accidentally involved in it. And, in truth, the original manuscript has always something which print itself must inevitably lose. An erasure, even a blot, a casual irregularity of hand, and all such little imperfections of mechanical executions, bring us close to the writer, and perhaps convey some of those subtle intimations for which language has no shape.

\* \* \* \* There are said to be temperaments endowed with sympathies so exquisite that, by merely handling an autograph, they can detect the writer's character with unerring accuracy, and read his inmost heart as easily as a less gifted eye would peruse the written page. Our faith in this power, be it a spiritual one, or only a refinement of the physical nature, is not unlimited, in spite of evidence. God has imparted to the human soul a marvellous strength in guarding its secrets, and he keeps at least the deepest and most inward record for his own perusal. But if there be such sympathies as we have alluded to, in how many instances would history be put to blush by a volume of autographic letters, like this which we now close!"\*

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\*A Book of Autographs: Hawthorne's Works. Ed. 1889. Vol. XII, 88.



Even in a sedate student of history, a new emotion may be produced by the actual and visible presence of such a letter as this, from Charles II. which speaks of a kindly heart, whatever we may think of the morals of the Merry Monarch. As Mr. Choate said some years ago, "he was a jovial blade."

"Whitehall, 10 Jan., 1684.

Harry Sidney. I would have you assure Temple that I am very kinde to him, and if he can compass the match he designes at Paris I will use my best offices with the king of France to make it in all points as easy to him as I can.

CHARLES R."

I trust that no disrespect is implied in spelling the word "king" with a small "K."

Coming to a much later day, it is surely of interest to read what George Bancroft thought of President Andrew Johnson, particularly in view of the discovery, from the Johnson papers in the Congressional Library, that the first message of that much-abused president, a state paper admired and wondered at when it appeared, was drafted by America's most distinguished historian. He is writing to Adam Badeau. "I knew Andrew Johnson thoroughly well," he says, "having once lived near him where I saw him every day and had the most unreserved intercourse with him. I then held and now hold that his arraignment was an act of injustice, and that he was on his trial thoroughly entitled to acquittal. The man had faults enough, ambition enough; but his unvaried intention was, to maintain fidelity to the Constitution and keep within its bounds." If we look upon Bancroft on that side of his character which is the most attractive, we cannot fail to be brought closer to him when we have before us,

in his own distinct handwriting, what he wrote to Bayard Taylor in 1864. "Mr. Lang has just left with me your chant for Bryant's 70th birthday. It is admirable. I expected good from you; and you have done exceedingly well. You need never regret that you made this most successful effort. . . . You are too modest. Your parts are *never* of the past." I am sorry to say that Bancroft then proceeds to suggest amendments of Taylor's verses, which in charity I refuse to quote. They partake of the quality exhibited in the Poems of 1823. The "Mr. Lang" mentioned in the letter is not Andrew the All-Knowing, but Louis Lang, an artist of New York, who composed the music for Taylor's Ode, which was sung at the Century Club on the night of November 5th, 1864, when—Bancroft presiding and Emerson, Holmes and a host of others assembled—that Association commemorated the arrival of the beloved poet at the age of three score and ten.

The innate modesty of Hawthorne shines out in this brief letter, which he wrote from Lenox in December, 1850, after he had given to the world "The Scarlet Letter," and had ceased to be what he once styled himself, "the obscurest man of letters in America." I do not know the name of the person to whom it was written: but that is of no moment. He writes: "I am gratified that you think me worth biographizing; and as soon as I get a book off my hands, I will see what I can do towards your purpose. You will not find it a life of many incidents. I could wish (not for the first time) that I were personally known to you, and could impart the requisite materials from one corner of the fireside to the other." That this expression was sincere, there can be no question; it does not bear out

the idea that Hawthorne was an unsocial person, shunning his fellow-beings. But I must not indulge too freely in my fondness for my own treasures.

Sometimes the satisfaction in the possession of "something which no one else may own," is seriously lessened by the discovery that some one else has a prize which he fondly believes to be the very thing which I cherish so lovingly. I have had at least three severe shocks but I have survived them. My letter of Oliver Wendell Holmes to Parsons, the translator of the "Inferno," dated in 1867, was printed in the "Century" for October, 1901, in an article by Maria S. Porter, with a few verbal changes of no moment but dated "1869," and the writer asserted that she was "the fortunate possessor of it." In my anxiety, I wrote to her at the address given to me by the publishers of the magazine, and told her courteously of my predicament. I received no reply, and as my letter was not returned to me I infer that possibly the lady had once owned the Holmes letter but had parted with it before her article appeared. Years ago I purchased what was called the manuscript of Moore's "Epicurean," covering one hundred and forty-seven pages of the two hundred and eleven comprised in the edition of 1839. Within a short time I saw in the catalogue of the sale of Le Gallienne's autographs, an announcement of "The Manuscript of Thomas Moore's Epicurean." Later it was sold in Bishop Hurst's collection, and the purchaser kindly allowed me to examine it. His manuscript is perhaps the "original manuscript of the original draft;" contained in a blank book; a preliminary sketch, and valuable enough, while mine is manifestly the copy sent to the printer.

I have what I am quite sure is the manuscript of

Barry Cornwall's "Life of Charles Lamb," a thick volume whose sheets seem, like my Moore's pages, to be those which the compositors handled. But when the aforesaid collection of the worthy Bishop was disposed of at auction, there was another "Manuscript of Barry Cornwall's Life of Charles Lamb" offered to a confiding public. I have seen this also, and while it is bound in a style quite similar to mine, it is much smaller and appears to be only a rough draft of a portion of the book. The Bishop and I seem to have been enamored of drafts. These fables teach us not to be unduly puffed up about our "author's manuscripts;" there may be several of the same work, for worthy books are not thrown off at a single sitting.

An English dealer once pointed out to me, by way of temptation to a patriotic American, the alleged manuscript of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," and was quite depressed in spirit when I told him that good old Doctor Smith spent a large part of his declining years in producing autograph copies of his one famous poem; and Holmes, in his generous way, did not disdain to turn out copies of "Old Ironsides" and "The Last Leaf"—precious things, even if not the originals.

The number of genuine collectors in the United States is not large, but it is increasing. To those of us whose appetite has not yet been satiated, it is discouraging to observe the rise in the prices of desirable autographs. The *Athenæum* article from which I have already quoted, refers to contemporaneous auction values, and speaks of Cromwell at five guineas, Francis I. at four shillings, Sir Francis Walsingham with five added signatures at nine shillings, Lord Nelson at two pounds fifteen shillings, and Gibbon at eight shillings. Before me is a manuscript catalogue of a leading London house in

which Cromwell figures at eighteen pounds twelve shillings, Francis I. at ten pounds, Walsingham at thirty-five pounds, and Gibbon at two pounds fifteen shillings. At a sale in London in May, 1904, a letter of Nelson to Lady Hamilton brought one thousand and thirty pounds—it seems an absurd price. The “Evening Post” bibliophile intimates that it is likely that “two agents at the sale had unlimited bids from long-pursed buyers, and each determined to outbid the other, and both lost their heads.” I am pleased to find one of my theories about these tremendous prices sustained by such a competent authority. There are other reasons for the differences in sale values. The importance of the contents of letter or document, the sudden increase in the fame of the writer, and the anxiety of some enthusiast to obtain the one specimen needed to complete a “set,” are all factors. Twenty years ago the eighteen lines which now confront me in the rather boyish scrawl of Theodore Roosevelt might have been found in the “seventy-five cent list,” but it cost me ten dollars—a fact which illustrates the truth of the adage concerning the unwise person and his supply of coin, more forcible than polite. It suggests the idea that the problem of what to do with our ex-Presidents is more easily solved than we had supposed. Ten autograph letters a day at ten dollars each would afford a respectable income, although there would be danger of overstocking the market; but Congress might establish a fixed price, deriving its power in that regard from the interstate commerce clause of the Constitution.

Bearing in mind the record contained in the Athenæum, it is not unlikely that the man who bought wisely in 1828 might have left a legacy to his descendants far more valuable than city lots in upper New York which

have enriched so many members of our modern aristocracy. Regarded as an investment, I am inclined to believe that a well-selected collection of autograph letters may be, in the long run, superior to railway stocks or bonds. It is true that autographs pay no dividends; but we know that, and we never know whether we are to get our income from what we are pleased to call our "securities." There is great satisfaction in being certain about something. I know that there has been offered to me for a dozen Revolutionary War letters, signed by Washington, double the amount I paid for them a few years ago, and I cannot say as much for any of the beautifully engraved certificates or evidences of indebtedness of "railways" or "industrials." I suppose the name "industrials" was adopted because of the energy with which the promoters "worked" the community. The real collector, however, has small regard for the sordid side of the occupation. I would not part with my Washingtons for many times their cost, but I like to think that somebody covets them.

When the Maniac charges me with turning up my nose at his kind, he is mistaken. I am not what Mrs. Squeers called "a turned-up-nose peacock,"—far from it. Dickens remarked that a peacock with a turned-up-nose is a novelty in ornithology and a thing not commonly seen. A collector of autographs who turns up his nose at any other collector is just as much of a novelty. The collector who deserves the name is comprehensive in his affections; nothing collectorial is alien to him. He would indeed be an offensive creature who would scorn the feeblest efforts of an aspirant, the incipient struggles of a neophyte whose untutored mind is striving to attain the ultimate goal of ambition. I remember that in my salad days I deliberately destroyed

a large number of interesting letters of public men in order to save only the signatures, and yet I escaped an indictment for malicious mischief. We must all have our beginnings; we must pass through the trying ordeals of infancy, of boyhood, and of young manhood. There are many stages of the malady which Edmund Gosse calls "collectaneomania."

A veteran collector would no more dream of distorting his nasal organ in the presence of youthful ignorance than Grant or Lee would have thought of sneering at a West Point cadet or Choate or Carter would have despised a Bachelor of Laws just out of Cambridge, Columbia, or Mr. Chase's School. It is delightful to observe the protoplasmic germ of a collector; no one can tell what may come of it; it may develop into greatness. The serene altitude of the Bixbys and the Morgans I do not hope to attain; but despite the ill-concealed amusement of the populace, I expect to continue to the end of life the pleasant quest of the autograph.





## REFLECTIONS OF AN AUTOGRAPH LOVER

**U**PON the principle of dichotomous division, dear to the soul of my old preceptor Dr. Atwater, mankind may be said to consist of two classes—those who collect autographs and those who do not. I am addressing myself to the second and numerically larger class, for to the others I can impart little or nothing of interest or value. They know it all themselves.

A well-beloved friend, known in the world of literature—the late Laurence Hutton—said in a lecture at Princeton that there were four methods of getting autographs: that is to say, by reception, by gift, by purchase, and by theft. I do not reproduce his exact words but only my recollection of them as he repeated them to me while we were enjoying a sociable cigar on the pleasant piazza of “The Inn.” He did not refer to a fifth method, adopted only by fiends, which may be styled “extortion,” possibly because he regarded it as only a species of the genus theft. It is the devotee of extortion who makes the honorable guild of autograph collectors unjustly odious in the sight of the world. He surely overlooked other ways and means which may be mentioned hereafter.

I have endeavored elsewhere in a mild and humble manner to vindicate the lover of autographs, truly so-called, but I fear that my well-meant effort has not been overwhelmingly successful. An acquaintance who made false pretense of having read the dissertation, said smilingly to me: “Why, I used to collect postage stamps

myself, when I was a boy'', unthinkingly classing my pursuit with the feeble strivings of his childhood. But it is not my purpose to make a brief in the case of the autograph hunter against the scoffer. He who does not comprehend intuitively the good there is in the collecting of autographs will never be convinced by all the logic of the schools. It must come to him like an appreciation of Tintoretto.

In many instances the utterances of those who abuse collectors are the result of pure ignorance. At a sale a few years ago, a number of letters were disposed of by auction, including some of Henry Clay and other American public men, which realized only small sums, and one of the late Edward VII. written when he was Prince of Wales and addressed to Mrs. Langtry, for which some misguided but enthusiastic individual paid ninety dollars as I have elsewhere related. Of course the low prices of the great Americans were occasioned by the profusion of the supply—the statesmen of Clay's time must have written letters by the mile. Say what the newspaper critics will, there are vast numbers of people of refinement who gaze with interest and curiosity on a letter from a King to a famous actress, but who cast an indifferent eye upon long and eloquent epistles of Clay or of Webster. To denounce all collectors as snobs because one of them paid ninety dollars for King Edward's autograph, is an excellent example of our old college acquaintance, the fallacy of the undistributed middle. We might as well say that because some of our metropolitan journals reek with sensation, foulness and crime, all newspapers are dirty and disreputable.

We will assume as a postulate that it must be of benefit to gather into one's possession the veritable

writings of the famous, the things which their own hands made, and we will consider briefly the way of the man with the autograph. A notable thing it is, indeed, to receive from a person of distinction an autograph letter addressed to one's self, voluntarily, without previous solicitation—like the one I am so proud of, from that noble statesman, Grover Cleveland, which I prize far beyond all the rest. Obviously it must be only the favored few who are able to point exultingly to letters of that order; men like James T. Fields, Charles Ollier, the publisher, or dear Laurence Hutton of blessed memory. I remember that the Landmarker refused to admit any other sort within the attractive boundaries of his collection. It is not pleasant to think that at some day such treasures must either be added to the number of marketable autographs or be buried irretrievably in some splendid library where nobody will pay much attention to them. The surest way of consigning to oblivion a collection of autographs is to bestow it upon a public library over whose glass-covered cases may well be inscribed *lasciate ogni speranza*. Perhaps the Library of Congress may be an exception. A few framed specimens like the fine George Washington, on the walls of the Bodleian, which stirred with pride my American heart, are suitable enough, but an autograph collection is not to be stored away in locked cabinets or in steel-bound vaults. It is something to be played with, to be pawed over, to be arranged and re-arranged, perpetually to be added to, enlarged, revised, and improved. It should be free from the intrusion of paste and of albums. It should be protected by wrappers or by portfolios only, except perhaps in the case of complete "sets", such as "Signers of the Declara-

tion", "Presidents", "Kings of England", "Napoleon's Marshals", or "Generals of the Revolution", and these, when completed and associated with the best of portraits, may be enshrined by our pet binder in the richest of crushed levant, or in the more durable pig-skin which that dean of collectors, Dr. Emmet, is said to prefer over all other kinds of binding.

It is also a delightful thing to acquire the autographs by gift, and the soul of the collector expands with emotion when he contemplates the charming specimens bestowed upon him by bountiful friends. I cannot forget my own joy over the rare letter of Richter sent to me by a brother lawyer, or the manuscript notes of a speech of Daniel Webster, which came from a kindly Boston book-lover, or the Rufus Choate manuscript, a portentous array of wild scrawlings, the gift of another New York lawyer endowed with a genuine affection for that which is good and instructive; or that splendid Kipling story, "The Recrudescence of Imray", as it was originally called, which the famous bank-president brought to me with his own hands, leaving me breathless with gratitude and amazement. My ponderous portfolios of Continental Congressmen would be sadly deficient but for the generosity of Danforth and Greenough. It speaks in no uncertain accents of the altruism of collectors, this fondness for helping others. I do not discover it in any other class of collectors. How much dear old Dr. Sprague did to enlarge the happiness of his brethren!

George William Curtis, that true literary artist, must have been one of the few who realize that it is more blessed to give than to receive, when he parted with that notelet which I have bound in my set of the

original numbers of *The Virginians* together with a page of the manuscript of that novel; it is quoted in James Grant Wilson's book:

"My dear Curtis:

Who can be the friend who asks for the signature of the unhappy

W. M. THACKERAY?"

I do not know who the friend was, but he deserved summary and condign punishment because he asked for a signature only. He who begs for a signature is lost. He has not attained the lowest round of the ladder; he has the same relation to the kingdom of collection as the patent medicine advertisement has to literature or which the lad with his hoard of postage stamps has to Beverly Chew or to Howard Mansfield. I shall never feel that I have done my duty as a citizen until I shall have secured the adoption of an amendment to the Constitution making the solicitation of an autograph signature equivalent to an overt act of treason.

Not many of us are fortunate enough to have the help of such assistants as the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table whose masterpiece, according to Donald Mitchell, will go with Montaigne, with the essays of Goldsmith, and with "Elia" upon one of the low shelves where it may be easily reached and where it will always be ready to give joy to the reader. The sweet doctor writes, in his clear, dainty hand:

"Beverly Farms, Mass., August 21, 1879.

My dear Longfellow: I send you a letter of Mr. Frederick Locker with a request which I know you will comply with. The daughter he refers to, as you may remember, married Tennyson's son. If you would have the kindness, after writing the lines

marked for yourself, to send the whole, letter and all, to Emerson, he to Whittier, and Whittier to me, I should feel in sending back the manuscript that I had made Mr. Locker happy, and that I should be glad to do, for he has shown me much kindness, though I have never seen him. I cannot help the fact that his letter has a few complimentary words about myself—you can skip those, if you will read the rest.

Always faithfully yours,

O. W. HOLMES."

I am told by those who knew him that Frederick Locker (later calling himself, for financial reasons, Frederick Locker-Lampson) who wrote the *London Lyrics*, was personally unpleasant, disagreeable, and repellent. But if any man who loves books or the makers of books pauses to ponder over the kindly epistle of the beloved Holmes, his imagination must surely be stimulated when he reflects that it was written by the witty poet and essayist, who is one of our dearest possessions; that it passed through the hands of a greater poet who was almost as lovable, to whom it was addressed; and that it reminds us of an accomplished author, who may have been ungracious and uncomfortable to meet, but who wrote charmingly and whose interesting *Confidences* recall pleasantly the literary life of London in his day. It recalls also the daughter-in-law of the great Laureate, and the wonderful New Englanders, Emerson and Whittier, who certainly did not refuse to comply with a request so gently made.

Not unlike the Autocrat's letter is this one to Curtis, which I find among my belongings:

"Sunnyside, September 12, 1854.

Mr. dear Mr. Curtis: I hasten to furnish the autographs you request for those two 'enthusiastic, lovely

and sensible' young ladies of whom you speak. During the prevalence of the autograph mania, it is quite a relief to have such fair and interesting applicants.

Yours very truly,

WASHINGTON IRVING.

George W. Curtis, Esq."

It is comical to observe the old bachelor's willingness to oblige pretty girls, as if *their* requests for autographs were less tiresome than those of mere men. Irving was always fond of the society of women, true as he was to the memory of the one whom he lost in her girlhood.

Another means of obtaining autographs, which may be a sub-head under the title "gift", is exchange. There was more exchanging done in the earlier days than now. Perhaps the most famous instance on record is the one described in the books, where Doctor Sprague, the renowned pioneer in our ranks, parted with the only known letter of Thomas Lynch, Jr., written to Washington on July 5, 1777. It went to Doctor Emmet in a barter, practically costing him \$700, according to the testimony of Lyman C. Draper, who published a volume about the Signers of the Declaration and the Signers of the Constitution. Lynch the youthful Signer, who was lost at sea when only thirty years old, ranks with Button Gwinnett, of Georgia, as the rarest of the noble company. Gwinnett left no holograph letters, as far as my information goes, but there are several autograph documents of his which are almost as valuable as letters would be. Doctor Sprague had the good fortune to know Judge Bushrod Washington, and obtained his permission to select whatever he pleased from the voluminous correspondence of the General, leaving copies of those he desired to take with him. He chose

about fifteen hundred, among them the unrivaled Lynch, the envy and despair of modern American collectors, who must needs be content with "cut" signatures. It is said that the fortunate owner once refused \$5,000 for it, and it is now the property of the New York Public Library.

Hutton, while mentioning four ways of gathering autographs, overlooked inheritance as well as extortion and exchange. The Leffingwell collection was bequeathed to a niece of the original collector; part of Sprague's went to his son, a respected lawyer in New York, who transferred it to the accomplished Albanian and entertaining speaker, the late John Boyd Thacher; T. Bailey Myers left his large accumulations to his son and daughter, from whom they passed to join the Emmet collection in the New York Library; and Mrs. Ely, of Providence, almost a unique example of a feminine autograph-collector, handed down her stores to her daughter and her grandson. I question whether an inherited collection ever appeals strongly to the legatees; the taste itself may be inherited but it does not pass by testamentary disposition.

It is the fate of most collections to be dispersed, and in my copy of Draper's book I have inserted a letter of Doctor Sprague, in which he writes, characteristically: "If you happen to have any duplicates, and will tell me what they are, and which you want, I will see if I can accommodate you by an exchange. When I began to collect autographs I was the intimate friend and correspondent of Robert Gilmour, of your city,—the first collector I ever knew. But it is long since his collection was sold and, I suppose, scattered to the winds." Gilmour (or Gilmor) was of Baltimore and some of his quondam possessions rest now in my own collec-



tion, to be dispersed again, I know, in the course of time.

Most of us acquired our autographs as Major General Stanley acquired his ancestors—by purchase; from dealers, from private owners, and from sales at auction. It is said that auction sales of autographs began in London in the early part of the last century, and since 1823 they have been quite frequent not only in England but in Paris, New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. It is not at all a romantic or a picturesque way, and one cannot grow very gossipy or loquacious about such purely mercantile transactions. As in the case of books, the auction prices seldom afford any just criterion of value. There may be an enthusiast, bent upon gaining certain items, who will run up the prices to fabulous heights, and again there may be occasions when, by reason of indifference, or of inadequate advertising, the finest specimens are knocked down for a trifling sum, but generally to professionals. I never got a bargain in my life; and if an amateur shows himself at such sales he is promptly frozen out or rather lifted out by a combination of the dealers. Usually it is better to treat with one of the regular tradesmen in autographs; the private vendor is commonly impossible. His idea of the value of what he has, is generally absurd. The dealer will ask more than his wares are really worth, but we must make due allowance, and as most of us are engaged in other pursuits demanding a fairly constant attention, we ought to pay him for the time he saves us as well as for his expert judgment, and the money is not thrown away. It is odd that some American autographs are very dear in England, and most English autographs are correspondingly dear in New York. This is of little moment to the money-kings who have

taken to autograph-collecting, and who think nothing of sweeping up a collection of thousands, while we humbler disciples are conscious of guilt if we timidly venture a few hundred dollars, after much pondering and self-castigation. Yet I believe that he who painfully brings together his beloved scraps piece-meal, by unaided toil and research, derives more pleasure from it than do those who purchase at wholesale.

Even the least avaricious of us sometimes dream of finding money; and when I have been thinking of a certain piece of luck which befell a lady I once knew, I am sure to dream of finding a long-forgotten hoard of autographs in some out-of-the-way place. A long time ago this lady was sojourning at the home of a venerable member of the Franklin family, and on seeing some men carrying off a large box or barrel of old papers, was moved to ask the owner to let her have the rejected rubbish. It turned out to be a wonderful autographic treasure—drafts of letters, essays, reports, Revolutionary accounts kept while the writer was in France, all in the hand of Benjamin Franklin; letters addressed to him, one from John Paul Jones describing the battle of the Bon Homme Richard, saved as by a miracle from the devouring maw of the paper mill. These now occupy a place of honor in the collection of a learned Pennsylvania Society, except the Jones letter which I am told was unluckily given away to some person unknown. It makes one's heart sink to be informed that there had been other barrels! The increased interest in all Revolutionary records which has come in later days makes it well nigh impossible that such a chance should come to anyone now. Yet the South has not been fully explored.

As to theft and extortion, it is well not to go into

distressing details. I do not justify the larceny of an autograph letter for purposes of gain, but when I am permitted to browse peacefully in some fat letter book appertaining to a Philistine, who knows not the joys of collecting, I am sorely tempted to purloin that which means little to him, but much to me. Hitherto I have sternly resisted the voice of the tempter.

“Why comes temptation, but for man to meet  
And master, and make crouch beneath his foot,  
And so be pedestaled in triumph.”

A confiding friend once admitted to me that he had stolen a set of autographs, and years afterwards tortured by conscience, made restitution to the true owner who had never missed them.

The London Athenæum observed in 1855 that “the story of what history owes to the autograph collectors would make a pretty book”. That book has never yet been written, but—



## A CERTAIN AFFECTATION OF THE GREAT

**A**S the fortunate individuals who are possessed of what the world calls greatness are necessarily different in capacity and endowments from the general body of the people, it is perhaps natural that they should observe the affairs of life from a point of view more elevated and commanding than that which is occupied by ordinary human beings. It is for this reason, no doubt, that they frequently display what we of humbler station are accustomed to characterize as affectations. Those who have devoted time and labor to the study of the lives of great men and women, in order that we may be instructed how to "make our lives sublime", will not need to be reminded of particular instances nor to be convinced by the production of testimony tending to establish the verity of the proposition. We are all familiar with the truth that such persons, for example, as Louis XIV, Queen Elizabeth, Napoleon, General Winfield Scott, Horace Greeley, the Kaiser Wilhelm, and others nearer home, were and are mere bundles of affectations.

I was moved to indulge in these profound reflections by the perusal of some remarks in the "Contributor's Club" in a number of the *Atlantic Monthly*, entitled "A Great Person and Certain Bores". The writer announced that he (or she) "has lately been private secretary and literary advisor (*sic*) to a Great Person", and contributed to the enlightenment of mankind this gem of wisdom: "The worst enemy to the Great Person is the autograph collector. Now, the col-

lector who buys with good money autographs that are already on paper, or who begs from his friends, or who knows celebrities well enough to ask them to their faces for their signatures, may be, and I am sure is, a great nuisance. But he is not a foe to society."

I have elsewhere expressed the opinion, founded partly upon knowledge acquired by a careful examination of written and printed records, and partly upon facts derived from personal observation, that the truly great are not really as much bored by requests for autographs as minor magnates of literature and of politics would have an admiring public believe. I shall not, however, attempt to justify or to defend the "pestilential nuisance" who "writes for autographs". There is no need of heaping upon the head of such a pseudo-collector any further epithets of scorn. Let us say that he is an impertinent intruder and a worm, and let it go at that. Away with him! What interests me is to observe that the Great appear to have developed their affectation so far as to denounce as a nuisance the man who "buys with good money autographs that are already on paper." What words of contempt would be employed to crush the person who bought them with forged notes or with counterfeit coin, or who purchased autographs inscribed upon brass, or bronze, or imperishable marble, or who made contracts for the future delivery of autographs in the confident expectation of a rise in the market value of autographs, I dare not imagine, but let us for a moment examine the merits of the charge preferred by so important a personage as a former "private secretary and literary 'advisor' to a Great Person."

It may not profit us to consider what may be the duties of a literary advisor to a Great Female Per-

son. A really Great Person frequently needs the help of a private secretary but surely not the services of a literary advisor, if that title is to be taken in its ordinary and obvious signification. It may be that the Great Female Person ought at times to be told what kinds of books are appropriate to particular hours of the day, or what styles and colors of binding harmonize most effectively with certain gowns or with the furniture of the apartment devoted to the study of the works of the poets, philosophers, or word-painters of the past. It may be that the Great Person has inaccurate ideas of the spelling of English words or of the construction of English sentences, but I cannot believe that she needs to be advised, let us say, that she must not prefer Alfred Austin to John Milton, or to discard Stubbs, Freeman and John Richard Green in favor of the modern writers of historical fiction. The inquiry may, however, be deferred. It is enough for the moment to say that the *Atlantic* article contains conclusive, intrinsic evidence that the Great Female Person mentioned in it is great, not by reason of intellect or achievement, but solely because of inherited riches; and that the ex-private secretary and ex-literary advisor, notwithstanding a cunning little phrase inserted with intent to deceive, is also one of the bright, alluring, charming, and illogical sex, whose members are, we are assured, in our hours of ease uncertain, coy and hard to please, and who rise to their loftiest sphere only in those uncomfortable moments when pain and anguish wring the brow. We may even be right in regarding this fabrication of libels upon harmless collectors as actually a much Greater Person than the wealthy lady who required her literary advice and counsel, and I am sure that I

would value her autograph far more highly, unless, as a million autograph writers, more or less, are accustomed to say, at the foot of a cheque.

Verily the judgment delivered by the ex-advisor whereby she decrees that the collector who buys constitutes himself a nuisance, shows her imperfect acquaintance with the facts and the law. I fear that she promulgated it without due attention to the injunction *audi alteram partem*. If there were any Court of Appeals of competent jurisdiction, that court would reverse it without hesitation, for manifest error appearing upon its face. The true collector, as we well know, does not "beg from his friends"—it is not necessary. Nor does he ask celebrities for their signatures. He cares little or nothing for the mere signatures of living persons. He would no more think of asking a great man for his signature than a numismatist would think of asking him for a dime. It is one of the delusions of the half-educated that real autograph collectors prize signatures. To be sure, a signature of Shakespeare, or of Julius Caesar, or of Judas Iscariot, would be valuable, for reasons which may readily be understood. But nobody in this incarnation is likely to trouble any of these personages for a specimen of his handwriting. We need not pause to consider the case of the beggar or the gatherer of "signatures by request". We are concerned only with him who "buys with good money". It is such a collector whom the ex-advisor addresses in an imaginary epistle wherein she saucily says: "If you are grown up and hardened in evil ways, if you are a professional collector of great men's letters and relics, you ought to be—. Perhaps in private and not in print the ex-advisor uses language not becoming in a self-respecting female.



We come to the allegation that the collector who buys the letters and relics of great men is a nuisance, hardened in evil ways, who ought to be—whatever the lady decrees by way of punishment. The accuser admits that such a collector is “not a foe to society”. For this, much thanks. But when, O advisor, you tell us that one who is hardened in evil ways is not a foe to society, you would have us believe that your society has no foe in him who is an evil-doer; wherefore your society must either have an evil-doer as a friend or it must be indifferent to his evil deeds. This comes of too long an association with the rich.

But why is the collector who buys, a nuisance? A nuisance is something which produces not merely annoyance but injury to some one. The acquisition and preservation of letters and manuscripts of distinguished persons is surely not of itself injurious to any one. It is neither *malum prohibitum* nor *malum in se*. If it were, the libraries and museums of the civilized world must be relegated to the category of nuisances and their founders and promoters must be evil-doers indeed. If the exposure of Martin Luther’s letter in the Vatican or the display of the fine Washington in the Bodleian is in the nature of a nuisance, let the ex-advisor make the most of it. If in the privacy of my den I preserve with fondness my manuscripts of Gray, of a story or poem of Charlotte Brontë, or of an epic of Southey, or of essays of Irving, or of poems of Swinburne; if I love to read and to caress the letters of Tennyson, of Browning, of Wordsworth, of Charles Lamb, of Dickens and of Thackeray, or of our own Hawthorne, Longfellow and Holmes, in what respect are the sensibilities of even a feminine literary advisor disturbed or wounded? If I should make an improper use of

the intimate and familiar confidence of any writer, so as to give pain to his friends, I might be justly censured; but it is not of such disclosures or publications that the criticism is made. Indeed, such disclosures usually come from the friends themselves—seldom or never from collectors. The indictment relates only to the collection and ownership of autograph letters. Surely we are right in dismissing the bill of complaint for want of equity and in regarding the careless utterance as merely an instance of a common and unworthy affectation on the part of Great Persons carried to an extreme. The worst of it is that the complaints are so often made by very Little Persons, emulating the greater ones.

Seriously, my skull is not so thick nor my skin so thin that I do not discern in this outpouring of the advisor's spirit an attempt at the lightly humorous. It is, however, humor of a cheap and rather time-worn vein. The late Irving Browne said that to call a lawyer a liar, a physician a murderer, and a clergyman a hypocrite was the favorite amusement of a numerically considerable portion of mankind. It is also a delight to the mildly facetious to read in the columns of the ordinary newspaper the stale and common jests about the somnolent policeman, the sugar-sanding grocer, and the dishonest Sunday-school Superintendent. These flat and arid pleasantries may perhaps be harmless, but I think that the pages of an honored and dignified magazine might be employed to better purpose than in disseminating silliness, the humor of which is so subtle that many casual readers may take it as if it were written in sober earnest. To endeavor to bring into ridicule a useful and meritorious occupation is unworthy of a publication as venerable and as highly respected as the *Atlantic Monthly*.

## A GEORGIAN POET

**T**HE designation of literary periods by the names of sovereigns is convenient but not very logical or scientific. We are accustomed to talk of the Elizabethan epoch, the time of Queen Anne, the Georgian era, and the Victorian age; and we generally understand what we mean by those titles. They are no more artificial than the division by centuries. There is no definite line of demarcation between the last decade of any century and the first decade of its successor, nor does any Chinese wall separate the closing days of Anne from the opening years of the first of the Hanoverians. When we speak of Elizabeth, we think of Shakespeare; when we speak of Anne, we think of Pope and Swift and Addison. The men of letters take precedence of the mere hereditary rulers. Anne did nothing important for literature and the Georges did even less. Yet "the Georgian era" is a phrase of utility and it conveys an impression sufficiently significant. But although Wordsworth and Coleridge, Scott and Byron, Shelley and Keats reached the summit of their poetic fame before the fourth George came to the end of his inglorious life, it is essentially an impression of that eighteenth century which most of us regard as a time of preparation for the wonderful century which has just passed away. Doubtless it was not as tame and placid as many of us are apt to believe; perhaps it was as astonishing and as eventful to the people who made its history as our own times seem to us. "Every age appears surpris-

ing and full of vicissitudes to those that live therein.”\*

Whatever may have been the excitements of politics and of the drama in those early Georgian days, it was surely not a period of great achievements in poetry. “ ’Tis an age most unpoetical,” wrote Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann in 1742, and while students have assiduously endeavored to explain the reasons why, and are not always in agreement, they concur generally in the conclusion of the witty sage of Strawberry Hill. Minto refers to the “common explanation of the utter decay of poetry in the eighteenth century, that people lived in slavish subservience to narrow and exclusive rules of art; that all who felt an impulse to write in verse were intimidated into taking artificial standards as their guide rather than Nature, that genius was stifled by timid and laborious effort after correctness.” The truth is that there were no great men who felt the grand, poetic impulse; and there was no encouragement to avail of poetry as a means of reaching the minds and hearts of their fellow-men. “The standard of taste in the time of Queen Anne, and till near the end of the century, was a self-consciously aristocratic and refined society, self-conscious of their superior manners and superior culture, and disposed to treat the ways of the vulgar with amused contempt. Fear of being vulgar, fear of being singular—these were the real nightmares that sat upon eighteenth century poetry.”† The fear of being vulgar and of being singular is not characteristic of our own time; but what Walpole said of his age may well be said of ours. In the Georgian era, politics and the play as well as the development of the art of prose writing were paramount; in the twentieth cen-

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\*Carlyle's Note Books. 141.

†Minto: Literature of the Georgian Era. 41.

ture, politics, science, sociology, and the novel are the most conspicuous objects of interest. The light of Victorian poesy faded with the passing of Browning and Tennyson, and went out altogether when Swinburne joined the ranks of the immortal dead. Already the priests of the new thought are telling us to forget Browning and Tennyson; but they are giving us nothing to fill the void left by the vanished masters. Yet the poet will come again. Men remain the same and in fullness of time the inspired singer will reappear. Meanwhile the mediocre will prevail in poetry, keeping the lamp burning, however dimly, until the flame bursts forth again in brightness.

It may be doubted whether it profits us to recall the memory of the minor poets of the early Georgian era, for they were feeble folk, yet they had some influence in their generation. Some of their thoughts remain in our minds. For the most part they were sincere and earnest, and they had noble aspirations, however far they may have fallen short of accomplishment. The record of their lives and of their work may not be as fascinating as a modern romance, but it is not to be despised, for it forms a part of our literary history.

The solemn stateliness of the seventeen hundreds was manifested by the publishing of poetry in ponderous quartos. The book I have before me is one of them—an attractive example of typographic art, bound in a decent crimson half-morocco, with delightful saffron edges. It is entitled "The Poems of Mark Akenside, M. D., London, printed by W. Bowyer and J. Nichols, and sold by J. Dodsley, in Pall Mall. MDCCLXXII." It contains a portrait of the author, exhibiting a gentleman of a heavy, rather mournful

countenance, with an expression of pensive dullness. The type of the book is a joy to the eye and a rebuke to the printers of these careless times.

It may be a shallow reflection, but nevertheless I am confident that it is not wholly without merit, that the memory of the poetic doctor is kept alive chiefly because his name possesses an alphabetical primacy in the catalogue of British Poets and also lends itself to a harmless if peurile paranomasia so obvious that it has afforded delight to countless thousands who have fondly cherished the idea that they were its original discoverers. Even the book-loving Irving Browne, who was capable of better things, had no scruples about telling us in verse that he could—

“Sit at home and double  
Quite up with pain from Akenside.”

It is by such inanities that many know of Akenside who never read a line he wrote.

The edition of the “Works”—I love those clean and comfortable old books,—was published soon after the author’s death and comprises “The Pleasures of the Imagination” in its original as well as in its revised form; “Odes on Several Subjects,” bitterly abused by Samuel Johnson; “Hymn to the Naiads”; and “Inscriptions.”

Poetry seems to come in cycles; there are waves of it. Surely the tide was at the ebb in the days of Mark Akenside. The great Cham of literature, who was usually a brutal and often a comical Cham, was strangely severe about Gray. The judgment of posterity reversed the decision of Johnson in Gray’s case, but it has affirmed the decree in the matter of Akenside. “I think we have had enough of Gray,” growled Ursa Major;

"I see they have published a splendid edition of Akenside's works. One bad ode may be suffered, but a number of them together make me sick."\* Then, when Boswell intervened with his artful encouragement of further talk—"Akenside's distinguished poem is his 'Pleasures of the Imagination,' but for my part I never could admire it as much as some people do,"—the mighty Doctor fell into the trap and added, "Sir, I could not read it through," to which Boswell appended his chirping response, "I have read it through, but I did not find any great power in it." It pleases me to think that they were chatting about the very edition to which my copy belongs. Later, the Doctor gave it as his opinion that "Akenside was a superior poet, both to Gray and Mason." He said this probably to emphasize his odd dislike of Gray rather than to eulogize Akenside; a dislike which arose from no personal jealousy but from an absolute incompatibility of temperament. When he wrote the *Lives of the English Poets*, he gave to Akenside a good deal of discriminating praise mingled with some well-merited censure. He was too much of a Tory to relish the poet's liberal views.

The prefatory "Advertisement" in the edition of 1772 was written by the most devoted of his friends, his benefactor Dyson, and the biography which forms part of it is a model of conciseness. "The author of these poems was born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on the 9th day of November, 1721. He was educated at the Grammar School at Newcastle and at the Universities of Edinburgh and Leyden, at the latter of which he took his degree of Doctor in Physic. He

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\*Boswell (Birrell's Edition), iii, 22. This was in 1772.

was afterwards admitted by mandamus to the degree of Doctor in Physic at the University of Cambridge; elected a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, and one of the Physicians of St. Thomas's Hospital, and upon the establishment of the Queen's Household, appointed one of the Physicians to Her Majesty. He died of a putrid fever on the 23d day of June, 1770, and is buried in the Parish Church of St. James, Westminster." Dyson might well have been a little more generous in his disclosures and the description of poor Akenside's disease seems needlessly offensive, but it is characteristic of the time. Johnson in his *Dictionary* quotes Quincey's definition of "a putrid fever" as "that kind of a fever, in which the humours, or part of them, have so little circulatory motion that they fall into an intestine, die and putrefy." This luminous gem of eighteenth century medical science is a puzzle to our modern understanding.

Mark Akenside was the son of Mark Akenside and Mary Lumsden, his wife. His father was a butcher; and Johnson, with the arrogance of a bigoted disciple of the Church of England, sneeringly says that he was "of the Presbyterian sect." When the young Akenside was a boy of seven, the butcher's cleaver fell upon his foot, causing a lameness which was always a source of mortification to him. It is said that the accident rendered it necessary for him to wear an artificial heel. For a time he was under the tuition of Mr. Wilson, a dissenting minister, and he attended the Grammar School at Newcastle, where, in later years, Lord Eldon and Lord Stowell were pupils. He "composed verses" at an early age. In 1737 he sent a poem to the "Gentleman's Magazine," which was



printed in that periodical, although the young author was unIntroduced and unknown. "It was entitled 'The Virtuoso'," says Mr. Gosse, "and was written in imitation of Spenser in the Spenserian measure. The piece consists of only ten stanzas, but they show a remarkable skill in versification, and appear to have preceded the longer and better known pieces by Shenstone, Thomson, and Gilbert Ridley, which soon after made the Spenserian stanza fashionable."\* In the August number, 1738, the same magazine published "A British Philippic," directed against the Spaniards, which was so successful that it was reprinted as a folio pamphlet. Whether he actually began his most conspicuous poem, "The Pleasures of the Imagination," at the age of seventeen, as is asserted, may be doubted. He himself says that the plan of the work originally occurred to him during a visit to Morpeth, within hearing of "the mossy falls of solitary Wensbeck's limpid stream"; but like Gibbon's famous account of his conception of the History, this may be only a poetic way of recording the first budding of an idea destined to be carried out in an indefinite future. At all events he published the work in 1744 and must have spent some years in its composition. Meanwhile he had been sent, at eighteen, to the University of Edinburgh in order to prepare for the ministry, but he soon found the profession of medicine more attractive than theology.

He had received the benefit of some funds supplied by the Dissenters to aid in the education of students; the Principal of Mansfield College informed Dr. George Birkbeck Hill that "at or soon after the Revolution a

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\*Dictionary of National Biography, Title "Akenside."

'Fund Board' was founded; from it grants were made to students to help them to proceed to a Continental or Scotch university, or even to find education at home."\* He returned to the donors what he had received, when he abandoned the idea of becoming a minister; an honorable act which scarcely deserves the sneer of an anonymous American writer, who makes the gratuitous suggestion that the means came "obviously out of some one else's pocket." What of it? He repaid the money and proved his honorable and commendable judgment of the matter.

Some remarks of Doctor Johnson upon this change of purpose are not undeserving of remembrance. "Whether," says the old tyrant, whom we love even when he is most dictatorial and overbearing, "when he resolved not to be a dissenting minister he ceased to be a Dissenter, I know not. He certainly retained an unnecessary and outrageous zeal for what he called and thought liberty:† a zeal which sometimes disguises from the world, and not rarely from the mind which it possesses, an envious desire of plundering wealth or degrading greatness; and of which the immediate tendency is innovation and anarchy, an impetuous eagerness to subvert and confound, with very little care what shall be established." There are several eminent personages who enjoy a vast amount of popularity in our own time who may well take to heart these words of the sturdy Doctor.

In Edinburgh, Akenside continued to study for three years. He was made a member of the Medical Society of Edinburgh on December 30, 1740. In the same

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\*Johnson's *Lives* (G. B. Hill's Edn.), iii, 411, Note.

†Originally "a furious and outrageous zeal, etc." Boswell's Johnson, Birrell's Edn.

year he privately printed a book of verses, including an ode "On the Winter Solstice," and an elegy on "Love." Dugald Stewart, in his "Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind," afterwards wrote of him: "There are various passages in Akenside's works which will be read with additional pleasure when it is known that they were not entirely suggested by fancy. I allude to those passages where he betrays a secret consciousness of powers adapted to a higher station of life than fell to his lot. Akenside, when a medical student at Edinburgh, was a member of the Medical Society, then recently formed, and was eminently distinguished by the eloquence which he displayed in the course of the debates. Dr. Robinson, who was at that time a student of divinity in the same university, told me that he was frequently led to attend these meetings, chiefly to hear the speeches of Akenside, the great object of whose ambition then was a seat in parliament, a situation which, he was sanguine enough to flatter himself, he had some prospect of obtaining, and for which he considered his talents to be much better adapted than for the profession he had chosen." He was what was known as a "republican" in sentiment, as poor young men under like circumstances are apt to be; but later, with the bait of office held out to him, he experienced a change of heart. Despite his oratorical occupations, he must have been working upon his poetical masterpiece. He went to Leyden in 1744, receiving his degree from that university on May 16th of the same year.

He had submitted his *Pleasures of the Imagination* to Dodsley in 1743, and Johnson heard the publisher relate that when the copy was first offered to him the price asked was one hundred and twenty pounds—

Nichols says, guineas. The price was one which Dodsley "was not inclined to give precipitately"; but he showed the manuscript to Pope, who "advised him not to make a niggardly offer, for this was not an every-day writer." As it turned out, the publisher must have made a good profit from the transaction, for the work became so popular that several editions were exhausted in quick succession.

The title had been used by Addison in the *Spectator*. The poem was published anonymously, and Dr. Johnson relates a story, the truth of which Boswell doubts, that one Richard Rolt "went over to Dublin, published an edition of it, and put his own name to it. Upon the fame of this he lived for several months, being entertained at the best tables as the 'ingenious Mr. Rolt'."\* It was said that "the demand for several successive republications was so quick" that the poet did not have sufficient time "in any of the intervals to complete the whole of his corrections."† A cheap edition, with the author's name, was published four months after the original appearance of the poem.

If anything further were needed to "advertise" the young author, it was supplied by means of that useful aid to the growth of fame, a controversy. Akenside, in the words of Johnson, "adopted Shaftesbury's foolish assertion of the efficacy of ridicule for the discovery of truth." He emphasized his approval in a note, and avowed his admiration for Shaftesbury by calling him "the noble restorer of ancient philosophy." Warburton assailed him on this subject in *Remarks on Several Occasional Reflections* (1744), Akenside's friend

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\*Boswell (Birrell's Edn.), ii, 31.

†Johnson's Brit. Poets (G. B. Hill's Edn.), iii, 412, Notes.

Dyson took up the cause in an *Epistle to Mr. Warburton occasioned by his Treatment of the Author of the Pleasures of the Imagination*,\* the greater part of which Mr. Dyce is inclined to believe was composed by Akenside himself† Warburton republished his remarks in a postscript to *The Divine Legation*, in 1766. Akenside returned to the battle in a satire on Warburton's edition of Pope, entitled *An Ode to Thomas Edwards*.‡ It was indeed, as Dr. Johnson calls it, a long and eager discussion of an idle question; one of those wearisome disputes of which they were so fond in Georgian days. Although Johnson says that in the revised poem the lines which had given occasion for Warburton's objections were omitted, George Birkbeck Hill calls attention to the fact that they were merely transferred, with a few minor corrections, from Book iii, 259-277 to Book ii, 523-541.

Thus at the age of twenty-four he found himself in the possession of a high literary reputation. On obtaining his degree of Doctor of Physic at Leyden, which, after only a month of study, he received on May 16, 1744, he had published, according to the custom in the German University, a thesis in Latin, called *De Ortu et Incremento Foetus Humani*, marked by some originality. He began practice at Northampton; but finding Sir James Stonehouse, an eminent physician and divine, already in full possession of the field, he removed in 1745 to North End, Hampstead, where he remained for more than two years. It is worthy of mention that after more than a century had passed since his brief sojourn there, writers of "literary pilgrim-

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\*Gent. Mag., 1744, p. 288.

†Dyce. Aldine Poets. *Akenside*. 14.

‡Odes, ii, 10 (1751).

ages" recorded the fact that he dwelt in the same little street where Arbuthnot and Mrs. Barbauld once lived, where Tennyson's mother died, and where Keats wrote *Endymion*. He passed a good deal of time in the society of his friend, Jeremiah Dyson, whom he first met in Leyden. In 1837 Wordsworth wrote:—"I am not unfrequently a visitor on Hampstead Heath, and seldom pass by the entrance of Mr. Dyson's villa on Golder's Hill close by without thinking of the pleasure which Akenside often had there." He adds: "He was fond of sitting in St. James's Park, with his eyes upon Westminster Abbey.\* In one of his *Odes*,† which seem to our modern taste so absurd and which were never esteemed, Akenside apostrophizes, "Thy verdant scenes, O Goulder's hill," and its "steep aërial way," beseeching it to

"Call thy sprightly breezes round,  
Dissolve this rigid cough profound."

Golder's Hill, now becoming a pretty suburb of London, is almost classic ground. "This picture composes well" said Gainsborough, as he stood with Sir Joshua upon the Hill. "Yes, beautifully! what aërial perspective!" answered Reynolds, "'Tis like viewing Nature through the medium of a lens." Here it was that Keats wrote on some scraps of paper, between breakfast and lunch, "sitting on a grass-plot under a plane tree," the "Ode to the Nightingale." Akenside also refers to his friend, Mr. Cofferer Dyson, observing that—

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\*Memoirs of Wordsworth, 1851, ii, 350.

†On Recovering from a Fit of Sickness in the Country, ii, 12.

“While around his sylvan scene  
My Dyson led the white wing’d hours,  
Oft from the Athenian Academic bowers  
Their sages came.”

Leaving Hampstead to seek a wider field, he decided to remove to London. Hawkins says that Dyson and Akenside “dwelt together at North End, Hampstead, during the summer, frequenting the Long Room and all Clubs and Assemblies of the inhabitants”; and now this rich and devoted friend “settled him in a small house in Bloomsbury Square, and enabled him to keep a chariot.”\* The generous benefactor further allowed him £300 a year and set to work to gain for the poet-physician a comfortable practice.

Dyson was a Secretary of the Treasury and afterwards Cofferer to the Houshold. He did something besides “leading the white wing’d hours,” for “he was supposed to have all the Journals of the House of Commons by heart”†—rather a vigorous supposition. On March 23, 1774, Horace Walpole wrote of Grenville’s bill for trying elections: “It passed as rapidly as if it had been for a repeal of Magna Charta, brought in by Mr. Cofferer Dyson.” Mr. Dyce gives a passage from an early letter of Akenside to Dyson,‡ in which he writes: “I never think of my connection with you without being happier and better for the reflection. I enjoy, by means of it, a more animated, a more perfect relish of every social, of every natural pleasure. My own character, by means of it, is become an object of veneration and applause to myself.” Dr.

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\*Hawkins’ *Johnson*, p. 243.

†*Gent. Mag.*, 1776, p. 416.

‡Dyce, 19; G. B. Hill’s *Notes to Johnson’s Akenside*, iii,

Hill thinks that if this had been written later "it would have been thought a parody of Boswell in his letters to Johnson." Dyson certainly gave substantial proof of his affection.

Akenside had not accomplished much in his practice at Northampton and Hampstead and it cannot be said that in the beginning he was very successful in London. Mr. Gosse remarks that "the faults of his intellect and his character now began to reveal themselves. He became mentally fossilized by pedantry and conceit, and he gave way to a native tendency to arrogance, which grew to be a great disadvantage to him." No doubt he was spoiled by Dysonian munificence. He was made a Fellow of the Royal Society and also a Fellow of the College of Physicians in 1754. His Cambridge degree, awarded in January, 1753, was, as we have seen, conferred "by mandamus," by which is doubtless meant that it was given in pursuance of a request from the Chancellor of the University. As physician to St. Thomas's Hospital and fourth censor of the College, he read the Gulstonian lectures in Anatomy in 1755, a course established in the seventeenth century by Theodore Goulston or Gulston. In these lectures he advanced opinions in regard to "the lymphatics" in opposition to those of Boerhave, which showed his courage. This gave rise to a dispute with Dr. Alexander Monro, then an eminent professor of anatomy in Edinburgh, who accused Akenside of plagiarism from him, but the better opinion is that he did not substantiate his accusation. In 1756 he delivered the Crounian lectures. This was a course founded by the widow of Croone or Croune, in 1706. Dr. Johnson says that he "began to give for these lectures a history of the



Revival of Learning, from which he soon desisted." Kippis in *Biographica Britannica* (i. 107), whom Johnson closely follows, says that "he gave up the course in disgust," because some objected to the subject as "foreign to the institution," but Mr. Dyce remarks that "the course is always of three lectures, and three he gave." He was not, however, fitted for the practice of medicine. It is very well for friendly writers to say that "he possessed too much independence of mind to have recourse to those artifices by which medical men in too many instances contrive to creep into practice"; that is the common excuse for men who fail. He was unfitted by temperament for the duties of a profession which demands the most gentle tact, the most cheerful self-sacrifice and the most unremitting labor to ensure reputation and success. We read much of the roughness and brusqueness of men like Abernethy, but with Akenside the faults were not merely of manner; they were faults of character. He was utterly unsympathetic. Still, it is said that towards the close of his life his practice had become "very large and fashionable."

In London he devoted little time to poetry, but he published several medical essays, a list of which is given in *Biographica Britannica*. Among these was a discourse on the dysentery (*De Dysenteria Commentarius*, 1764), much praised for its Latinity. In March, 1745, he had put forth his collection of *Odes*, and in November, 1744, *The Epistle to Curio*, a satire on William Pulteney, which many regarded as his best poem. Macaulay said of it: "If Akenside had left lyric composition to Gray and Collins, and had employed his powers in grave and elevated satire, he might have disputed the preëminence of Dryden."

Pulteney had opposed Walpole, and those who, like Akenside, were hoping for reform, looked upon him as the leader of "the better element," but when Pulteney became a peer and surrendered to the forces of corruption, they poured forth upon him their vials of wrath and likened him to that Curio, the friend of Cicero, who had been the advocate of liberty but who went over to Cæsar from motives of personal ambition. The poet tells of the lofty expectations entertained of Curio's patriotic and disinterested zeal for freedom, but lamenting that when the "deciding hour" arrived he proved false, exclaims:

" 'Twas then—O shame! O trust how ill repaid!  
O Latium, oft by faithless sons betrayed!—  
'Twas then—What frenzy on thy reason stole?  
What spells unsinewed thy determined soul?  
Is this the man in Freedom's cause approved?  
The man so great, so honoured, so beloved?  
This patient slave by tinsel chains allured?  
This wretched suitor for a boon abjured?  
This Curio, hated and despised by all,  
Who fell himself to work his country's fall?"

The final verses are not without dignity when he says of "wise liberty":

"Protect her from yourselves, ere yet the flood  
Of golden luxury, which commerce pours  
Hath spread that selfish fierceness through your  
blood,  
Which not her highest discipline indures.  
Snatch from fantastic demagogues her cause;  
Dream not of Numa's manners, Plato's laws,  
A wiser founder and a nobler plan,  
O sons of Alfred, were for you assign'd:  
Bring to that birthright but an equal mind,  
And no sublimer lot will fate reserve for man."

Beset by his propensity to rewrite his productions, he transformed the Epistle into an Ode and in the process weakened it sadly.

The Odes were his poorest compositions. "Nothing favorable can be said" of them, according to Johnson. Horace Walpole, writing on March 29, 1745, after referring to Lee, adds: "There is another of those tame geniuses, a Mr. Akenside, who writes Odes; in one he says: 'Light the tapers, urge the fire.'" Gray wrote on March 8, 1758, of Dodsley's *Collection*, "The two last volumes are worse than the four first; particularly Dr. Akenside is in a deplorable way." No one seems to have had a good word for them. He was hampered by rhymes. As the savage *Quarterly* said of Keats in the memorable review of *Endymion*, "He seems to us to write a line at random, and then he follows not the thought excited by this line but that suggested by the *rhyme* with which it concludes. There is hardly a complete couplet inclosing a complete idea in the whole book." In blank verse, as Johnson points out, Akenside was exempt from the necessity of closing the sense with the couplet; and there was no interference with the exuberance of his imagery and description.\* In 1746 he wrote the "Hymn to the Naiads," mention of which will be made later on; in January, 1746, he became editor of the *Museum*, Dodsley's magazine, for which he wrote prose essays; in 1748 he published "Ode to the Earl of Huntingdon; in 1749, "The Remonstrance of Shakespeare," and in 1758, "An Ode to the Country Gentlemen of England," as well as a large number of new pieces, including "The Hymn to the Naiads," which he put forth in the sixth

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\*Dyce, p. 49.

volume of Dodsley's "Miscellany." The "Call to Aristippus," a pamphlet in verse, appeared in 1758.

His service as physician in the Hospital—where he became assistant in January, 1759, and two months later principal physician—was not distinguished by much success, however sound may have been his medical learning or however great his skill. Dr. Lettsom, who was a student there, is reported as saying that "he was the most supercilious and unfeeling physician that he had hitherto known." His temper was bad; he was foolishly proud and arrogant, brutal in his behavior to the poorer class of patients; involved by his irascible nature in perpetual disputes. He changed his politics and became a Tory to obtain the post of Physician to the Queen in 1761; but then, as now, party ties sat loosely upon men when it was a question of place; enthusiasts for liberty and popular rights are generally not unlike the two Kings of Barataria in *The Gondoliers*. Many excuses have been urged for his failings; his lowly birth, his delicate health, his irritable nerves, his early success, and the insolent caste feeling of society, which aroused all the bitterness of a sensitive disposition.

That he was highly esteemed as a poet is beyond dispute. We know what Pope thought of him before he became famous. Upon the publication of his *Ode to the Country Gentlemen of England*, the *Monthly Review* said he "well deserved to be stiled the Poet of the Community," and Doctor Johnson not only wrote that "he is to be commended as having fewer artifices of disgust than most of his brethren of the blank song," but said of *The Pleasures of the Imagination* that it was "an example of great felicity of genius and uncommon amplitude of acquisitions."

He talked well, although devoid of any sense of humor, and he never mastered the peculiar style of rough repartee which was so much in vogue in the eighteenth century. He avoided "the bibulous and gluttonous element" of that period. It is written of him that his "outward ensemble was eminently what the vulgar would term 'guyable.' He was not a little of a fop. He was plain-featured and yet assuming in manner. \*

\* \* His prim formality of manner, his sword and stiff-curved wig, his small and sickly face trying to maintain an expression impressively dignified, made him a ludicrous figure, which his contemporaries never tired of ridiculing and caricaturing."\* Henderson, the actor, said that Akenside, when he walked the streets, looked for all the world like one of his own Alexandrines set upright."† Smollett made fun of him in *Peregrine Pickle*, where he served as a model for the physician who gave a comical dinner in the fashion of the ancients, and who was "a young man in whose air and countenance appeared all the uncouth gravity and supercilious self-conceit of a physician piping hot from his studies.‡ \* \* \* Not contented with displaying his importance in the world of taste and polite literature, his vanity manifested itself in arrogating certain material discoveries in the province of physick. \* \* \* He was strangely possessed with the opinion that he himself was inspired by the soul of Pindar." But it was something to have been burlesqued by Smollett.

One of his biographers, Charles Bucke, says of him:

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\*See sketch in *World's Best Literature*, vol. I.

†Dyce, 76.

‡*Peregrine Pickle*, 42, 43.

"The features of Akenside were expressive and manly in a very high degree; but his complexion was pale, and his deportment solemn. He dressed too in a very precise manner, and wore a powdered wig in stiff curl. In respect to disposition, he is said to have been irritable, and to have had little restraint of his temper before strangers, with whom he was precise and ceremonious, stiff, and occasionally sententious and dictatorial. \* \* \* He had a high sense of his own merits, and when persons of an inferior cast presumed upon their ignorance, or want of good breeding, to intrude their observations too unceremoniously, Akenside denied himself the satisfaction of chastising their presumption by the adoption of a manner perhaps too severe, satirical, and splenetic. *But in the society of those mild and gentle spirits who admired his genius and respected his virtues, he was kindness itself.* His language flowed chastely, gracefully, and eloquently; and his varied knowledge, argumentative reasonings, and nice distinctions, his fine appreciation of philosophical allusions, and keen relish for the beauties of creation, *would display themselves in pure and copious streams of eloquence*, never, perhaps, surpassed by the greatest masters of social life the world ever knew. His memory was at once discriminating and comprehensive. He retained all the riches of art, science, and history, legislation, poetry, and philosophy; and these he would draw out and embody to suit the occasion required, in a manner not more wonderful to those who were partially informed *than delightful to those who could follow his track, and continue with him to the end.* Yet he is said to have in general, wanted gaiety of heart in society. He was naturally of a cheerful temper; but his cheerfulness was accompanied by a mellowness of feeling which sometimes relapsed into melancholy."

A cheerful, mellow melancholy must be a wonderful thing. All this, which the artless biographer—who is guiltless of the italics—doubtless meant for praise, es-

tablishes the fact that Akenside was a solemn, disagreeable, conceited creature of the species to which men in nearly every age have given the title of "ass", —never pleasant except when surrounded by flatterers, and even under such favorable conditions a stupendous, lugubrious bore, always a cad of the most offensive sort. It is perhaps one of the blessings of our day that in conversation "pure and copious streams of eloquence" are quickly and effectually dammed.

Mr. Gosse quotes from a contemporary of the poet this description:

"One leg of Dr. Akenside was considerably shorter than the other, which was in some measure remedied by the aid of a false heel. He had a pale, strumous countenance, but was always very neat and elegant in his dress. He wore a large white wig and carried a long sword. He would order the servants (at Christ's Hospital) on his visiting days to precede him with brooms to clear the way, and prevent the patients from too nearly approaching him."

When Johnson made his well-known remark about the jealousy which some men feel in regard to friends who rise above them, he moved Boswell to refer, as an example, to the withering of "the early friendship between Charles Townshend and Akenside." The latter alludes to it himself when he says, in his "Ode to Townshend":

"For not imprudent of my loss to come,  
I saw from Contemplation's quiet cell  
His feet ascending to another home,  
Where public praise and envied greatness dwell."

It is more charitable to think that the cessation of their intimacy was due more to the absorption of Townshend in his career as "the spoiled child of the

House of Commons" than to petty envy on Akenside's part. Notwithstanding the personal peculiarities of the poet he appears to have had the faculty of winning friends, from the time when, at an early age, he attracted the regard of Doctor Philip Doddridge, the hymn writer. Hawkins says that "his conversation was of the most delightful kind," but that he lacked "that quality which Swift somewhere calls an aldermanly virtue, discretion."\*

Warton thought that "of all our poets perhaps Akenside was the best Greek scholar since Milton."† It is interesting to know that he was not a good reader of his own verse.‡ His great biographer refers to his ambitious ostentation of elegance and literature, and regards him as having a high place "among the wits"; but Johnson did not use the word in the sense to which modern usage has restricted it; he meant only "those who have knowledge."

His poetry was technical rhetoric usually displayed in good blank verse; but it was pedantic and prosaic at its best. Doctor Minto seems to think that his admiration of Shakespeare is quite commendable, and in the book from which we have quoted gives twice a long extract from the "Remonstrance" which Akenside saw fit to deliver in 1749 when a company of French players acted by subscription at Drury Lane, in which the "Bard of Avon", as the pompous physician probably called him, is made to protest against the ruthless "invasion of his domain." His favorites, however, were Pope, Addison, Shaftesbury, and Hutchinson, from

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\*Hawkins' *Johnson*, 242, 247.

†Essay on Pope, ii, 455.

‡Dyce, 53.



whom, as well as from Plato, he took most of his material. But we cannot forget that his principal work was the precursor of Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope* and of Rogers' *Pleasures of Memory*, although both of these more modern poems are almost as obsolete as their prototype.

Expressions of personal preference are dangerous now, because the youthful sages who "do" the book reviews in the newspapers are the only critics who are permitted to indulge in them. When ordinary men venture to infringe upon this journalistic monopoly and timidly disclose their own views, they are told that "to people who have the habit of thinking for themselves they are unsatisfactory"\*—whereby all criticism is wiped from the earth by one Podsnappian wave of the hand. But as newspaper reviewers neither know nor care much about Akenside—should one of them ever deign to cast his lordly eye upon this page he will forthwith insist that he has been familiar with Akenside from his cradle—I may perhaps be suffered to say that I like best his "Hymn to the Naiads," notwithstanding its ponderous dignity, not altogether appropriate in an address to nymphs. Gosse says that it is beautiful and perhaps the most "elegant" of his productions. There is power in the lines:

"Down they rush  
From Nysa's vine-impurpled cliff, the dames  
Of Thrace, the Satyrs, and the unruly Fawns,  
With old Silenus, reeling through the crowd  
Which gambols round him, in convulsions wild  
Tossing their limbs, and brandishing in air  
The ivy-mantled thyrsus, or the torch

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\*The New York Times, July 10, 1909.

Through black smoke flaming, to the Phrygian pipe's  
 Shrill voice, and to the clashing cymbals mix'd  
 With shrieks and frantic uproar."

One of the odes affords a fair example of what may be regarded as his best style—"On a Sermon against Glory"—

"Come, then, tell me, sage divine,  
 Is it an offense to own  
 That our bosoms e'er incline  
 Toward immortal glory's throne?  
 For with me nor pomp, nor pleasure,  
 Bourbon's might, Braganza's treasure,  
 So can fancy's dream rejoice  
 To conciliate reason's choice,  
 As one approving word of her impartial voice.

If to spurn at noble praise  
 Be the passport to thy heaven,  
 Follow thou those gloomy ways:  
 No such law to me was given.  
 Nor, I trust, shall I deplore me  
 Faring like my friends before me;  
 Nor an holier place desire  
 Than Timoleon's arms acquire,  
 And Tully's curule chair, and Milton's golden lyre."

The most important of the poems, comprising about two thousand lines, divided into three Books, was an attempt to describe the sources, methods, and results of imagination and to portray the pleasurable feelings derived from its exercise, and from the study of nature, art, and history. He announces his purpose at the outset:

"With what attractive charms this goodly frame  
 Of nature touches the consenting hearts

Of mortal men; and what the pleasing stores  
Which beauteous imitation thence derives  
To deck the poet's or the painter's toil;  
My verse unfolds."

But it is not desirable to multiply quotations from long poems: they seldom do full justice to the author and when torn from the context are of little value in enabling a reader to arrive at a fair judgment. Aken-side's works are included in almost every collection of "British Poets," and if any one has sufficient curiosity to pursue the subject, the means of information are within easy reach. The standard edition is that which was edited by Alexander Dyce and published in 1834.

Much has been written about *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, and the reviewers unite in ascribing to it the merits of elevated sentiments, poetic beauty, and high philosophy, expressed in dignified measures and harmonious periods; but they temper their praise by referring to the length of the sentences, the needless multiplication of words, and the redundancy of the imagery. Campbell analyzes the work, but while he concedes to the poet a high zeal of classical feeling and a graceful development of the philosophy of taste in the purely ethical and didactic parts of his subject, he thinks that sweetness is wanting, that the writer does not arouse the emotions, and that he appeals too seldom to examples from nature.\* Campbell dwells upon the coldness and tediousness of the episode of Harmodius, omitted in the revision; and another commentator says:

"Much of it (note especially the episode of Pisis-tratus at the beginning of Book III) is literally prose cut into lengths." The reader of to-day will find his

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\*Campbell's Specimens of the British Poets.

own impressions well described in the *Life* by Johnson: "His images are displayed with such luxuriance of expression, that they are hidden, like Butler's Moon, by a 'Veil of Light'; they are forms fantastically lost under superfluity of dress. *Pars minima est ipsa puella sui*. The words are multiplied till the sense is hardly perceived; attention deserts the mind, and settles in the ear. The reader wanders through the gay diffusion, sometimes amazed, and sometimes delighted; but after many turnings in the flowery labyrinth, comes out as he went in. He marked little, and laid hold on nothing."

Gray wrote of it on April 26, 1744:

"To show you that I am a judge, as well as my countrymen, I will tell you, though I have rather turned it over than read it (but no matter, no more have they), that it seems to me above the middling; and now and then for a little while, rises even to the best, particularly in description. It is often obscure and even unintelligible, and too much affected with the Hutchinsonian jargon. In short, its great fault is that it was published at least nine years too early; and so methinks, in a few words, *à la mode de Temple*, I have very pertly despatched what, perhaps, may for several years have employed a very ingenious man, worth fifty of myself."

Hazlitt indeed liked the revised poem best, but he was alone in his opinion as far as I can ascertain. But Gray disliked Akenside "and in general all poetry in blank verse except Milton."

He could not let his chief poem alone; and from 1757 until his death he was engaged in remodeling it. Both versions, original and revised, are given in the edition of 1772. He began a fourth book, but wrote

only one hundred and thirty lines. It was from this unfinished book that Wordsworth took the motto to *Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems* (1835),

“Poets \* \* \* dwell on earth  
To clothe whate’er the soul admires and [or] loves  
With language and with numbers.”

The later revision exemplifies the truth of the theory that poets seldom improve their published work by emendations. Doctor Johnson says of the revision that “he seems to have somewhat contracted his diffusion; but I know not whether he has gained in closeness what he has lost in splendor.” Macaulay says he spoiled it, and another critic observes that he “stuffed it with intellectual horsehair.” The truth of these remarks may be perceived by comparing these opening lines of the revision with the corresponding lines of the original:

“With what enchantment nature’s goodly scene  
Attracts the sense of mortals; how the mind  
For its own eye doth objects nobler still  
Prepare; how men by various lessons learn  
To judge of beauty’s praise; what raptures fill  
The breast with fancy’s native arts indow’d  
And what true culture guides it to renown;  
My verse unfolds.”

The original is stiff enough, but this is even more stilted.

It is not discreditable to him that he should have regarded his work so seriously as to toil over it in the hope of improving it; but the first glow of his youthful enthusiasm was better than the laborious effort of his maturity. He did, however, anticipate some of Doctor Johnson’s criticisms. The Doctor complained of the viewing of “the Ganges from Alpine heights” in the lines (Book i, 177)—

"Who that from Alpine heights, his labouring eye  
Shoots round the wide horizon, to survey  
Nilus or Ganges rolling his bright wave."

This had been changed so as to read:

"Who that from heights aerial sends his eye  
Around a wild horizon, and surveys  
Indus or Ganges rolling his broad wave."  
(Book i, line 232, Revision.)

The Doctor further said: "And the pedant surely intrudes—but when was blank verse without pedantry?—when he tells how " 'Planets absolve the fated rounds of Time.' " But the lines (Book i, 194) were changed in the later work and are:

"Bend the reluctant planets to move each  
Round its perpetual year."  
(Book i, line 252, Revision.)

This indicates that Johnson had never taken the trouble to read the revised poem.

In the latter part of his life he produced an occasional ode or dissertation. He lived for a time in Craven street, but removed in 1760 to a house in Burlington street which he occupied at the time of his death. He was only in his forty-ninth year when, on June 23, 1770, he was carried away by that "putrid fever," and it is a coincidence that Shenstone died at the same age and of the same disease. It is said that he died in the bed in which Milton died. On June 28 he was buried in the church of St. James.

There was no mention of his death in the *Annual Register* or even in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, to which he had been so frequent a contributor. His life was

by no means a failure: he attracted the attention of his contemporaries; his poems were admired in his own generation; and although he was never the idol of an hour, his merits were recognized by the leaders of thought in his day. He has won immortality of a certain kind, although not the immortality of quotation. He foreshadowed in a vague way the return of the poet to the field of nature. He was toiling under circumstances which were not favorable to his work. It has been observed that the poet "should preach or poetize for his age, should elevate and beautify the ideas which are current in it." But the ideas which were current in England during his time were not susceptible of much beautifying or elevation. A lofty and original genius might have accomplished something in that direction, but Akenside had little or no originality; he built up his verses with materials derived from the books which he preferred; he was a manufactured poet, without a spark of genius. Despite his vanity and conceit, he must have had an uneasy consciousness of the inferiority of his work, or he would not have wasted so much time in amending it and striving to polish it when what was needed was substance rather than polish. The mania for revising one's own work almost always indicates irresolution and a lack of confidence in its merit.

He was about the latest of the machine poets. The year of his death was the year of Wordsworth's birth; and as with the elder poet the sun of the old school was setting, with the younger poet began the dawn of the day when the artificial vanished and the fragrance of the early morning of poesy once more rejoiced the minds and the senses of mankind.





## A FAMOUS REVIEWER

### I

**A** SUCCESSFUL lawyer whose name is associated with no great causes; a leader in literature whose only book was a mere collection of essays reprinted from a magazine; a renowned talker who left to posterity no legacy of memorable sayings; Francis Jeffrey owes his fame, or so much of it as survives him sixty years after his death, chiefly to his work as a writer of reviews.

The popularity and influence of periodical Reviews have suffered so seriously in these days of modern culture that they may be said to have disappeared. But there was a time when the Review was all-powerful. Whether its decline is due to the vast increase in the number of readers, or to the lowering of the level of education, or to the fact—if it be a fact—announced recently by a publisher, that “to-day the popular author addresses himself to women, since men no longer read books,” or to the growing independence of readers who resent attempts to guide or to control their judgments, only one extremely sure of himself would attempt to decide. The authority of the Review was never as great in America as it was in England; the old *North American*, sufficiently heavy in its prime, ponderously imitative of British models, was the sole publication of that character in this country which deserved the name, and while it is still a magazine and

preserves the title, it has become only a repository for articles too serious for use in the much be-pictured and advertisement-crowded "monthlies" which serve to amuse the idler and find their principal marts in the news-stands of the street, the hotel and the railway station. Yet in the earlier half of the last century the British Reviews were the chief means by which the leaders of thought essayed to reach the minds of men and to give them instruction in politics as well as in literature.

Before the founding of the *Edinburgh Review* in 1802, the magazines which pretended to do the work or reviewing were but poor things, as dull as the dull-est of periodicals in the eighteenth century, and those were very dull indeed. There was the *Monthly Review*, established in 1749, conducted by Ralph Griffiths, "who starved and bullied Goldsmith," and later by his son, which lasted until 1845 and was in its earliest years perhaps the best of the lot. Jeffrey wrote for it occasionally. In June, July, and November, 1802, he published in the *Monthly* articles on White's *Etymoligon* and Southey's *Thalaba*. There were also the *Critical Review*, begun in 1756, the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1731), the *London Magazine* (1732), and *Scot's Magazine* (1739). But the *Monthly* remarked that the *Vicar of Wakefield* had "defects enough to put the reader out of patience with an author capable of so strangely underwriting himself," and as late as 1798 pronounced *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* to be "the strangest story of cock and bull that we ever saw on paper," while the *Gentleman's Magazine* sagely commented upon Gray's immortal poem in manner following: "Elegy

wrote in a country church-yard, 4to. Dodsley, 6d.: seven pages. The excellency of this little piece more than compensates for its lack of quantity." The Bentley edition, two years later, called forth a luminous comment about the "head and tail pieces with which each poem is adorned, which are of uncommon excellence, the Melancholy in particular being exquisite." In all of them there was scarcely any literary criticism. The articles were furnished chiefly by dreary drudges, hack-writers dominated by the booksellers, receiving absurdly scanty pay. It is true, however, that the books they reviewed were scarcely less dreary than the reviews themselves.

In their *History of English Literature* Garnett and Gosse say, with some justice:

"Readers of the early numbers of the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* will to-day be surprised at the emotion they caused and the power they wielded. They are often smart, sometimes witty, rarely sound, and the style is, as a rule, pompous and diffuse. The modern reader is irritated by the haughty assumption of these boyish reviewers, who treat genius as a prisoner at the bar, and as in all probability a guilty prisoner. \* \* \* This unjust judging of literature, and particularly of poetry—what is called the 'slashing' style of criticism—when it is now revived, is usually still prosecuted on the lines laid down by Jeffrey and Gifford. It gives satisfaction to the reviewer, pain to the author, and a faint amusement to the public. It has no effect whatever on the ultimate position of the book reviewed, but, exercised on occasion, it is doubtless a useful counter-irritant to thoughtless or venal eulogy."

As far as the pompous style is concerned, it was not peculiar to the Reviews of the time: it pervaded all

prose literature; and when we consider the enormous output of books we are now familiar with, we may regret that their power of correction has substantially disappeared.

The refinement of style for which certain of these magazines were distinguished is indicated by some of the remarks made by one about the other. The *Monthly* said that the staff of the *Critical* was composed of "physicians without practice, authors without learning, men without decency, and critics without judgment." Smollett in the *Critical* declared that *his* Review at least was not conducted by "a parcel of obscene hirelings under the restraint of a bookseller and his wife, who presume to revise, alter and amend the articles." Mrs. Griffiths, who had literary tastes, was reviled as "an antiquated Sappho, or rather a Pope Joan in taste and literature, pregnant with abuse, begot by rancour, under the canopy of ignorance."

The story of the inception of the *Edinburgh* in that little room in the house on Buccleuch Place has been told so often and by so many that it has become a familiar tale. There had been an *Edinburgh Review* in 1756, but it had expired after a twelvemonth life, destined to be revived under brilliant auspices—brilliant at least in the matter of brains, for the youthful galaxy composed of Jeffrey, Sydney Smith, Brougham, and Horner well deserved to be called "brilliant." Smith's account of the matter was disputed by Brougham long years afterwards, but its correctness in the main has been established. The old-age reminiscences of the Chancellor were not conspicuous for accuracy and his overweening sense of self-importance led him to exaggerations where his own actions were involved. Sydney Smith was the editor of the first number, if it may be

said to have had a single editor, but thereafter Jeffrey assumed full charge. Brougham's own copy of that first number, with his autograph on the fly leaf, dated "1802," lies before me. It has the initials of the authors marked in the index against the titles of their contributions. The two hundred and fifty-two pages of close print make up a large book, and I am sorry to say, rather a dull one. It is not easy to understand now why it could have aroused much interest. But on reflection, one may comprehend that it was such an advance on its predecessors that it commanded instant appreciation. According to Brougham's notes, Jeffrey had five articles, filling sixty-seven pages; Brougham, four, of forty-six pages; Hamilton four, of thirty-seven pages; and Horner, Smith, Macfarlan, Dr. John Thomson, Dr. Thomas Brown, and Murray follow with a lesser amount. The volume has an especial interest, for, as Mr. J. Rogers Rees remarks in a pencil note, "this attribution in the founder's autograph sets the question of the several contributors finally at rest." The inaccuracy of the story of the establishment of the Review which Brougham gives in his *Memoirs*, is indicated by the fact that while he asserts that he himself wrote in the first number the reviews of "Oliver's Travels," "Baldwin's Egypt" (jointly with Jeffrey) and "Playfair's Illustrations of the Huttonian Theory," yet in his personal copy of that number he has, in his own handwriting, asserted that the first two were by Hamilton and the third by John Macfarlan. But he does justice to Jeffrey, of whom he says:

"Jeffrey's labors as an editor were unceasing, and I will venture to say, if we had searched all Europe, a better man *in every respect* could not have been found. As a critic he was unequalled; and, take them as a

whole, I consider his articles were the best we had. As an instance of the care he took in revising and preparing contributions, I remember an article on the *Memoirs of Prince Eugene* was sent to Jeffrey by Mill. Jeffrey gave it to Dr. Ferrier, of Manchester, to revise; and when he got it back from Dr. Ferrier, he himself corrected it, and added the moral reflections and the concluding observations on the new Paris edition of the work."

Perhaps, in preference to the various accounts by Sydney Smith, Brougham, and others, one may trust most in Jeffrey's own story as related by him in a letter written in 1846 to Robert Chambers. Jeffrey says:

"I cannot say exactly where the project of the *Edinburgh Review* was first talked of among the projectors. But the first serious conversations about it—and which led to our application to a publisher—were held in a small house, where I then lived, in Buccleuch Place (I forget the number). They were attended by S. Smith, F. Horner, Dr. Thomas Brown, Lord Murray (John Archibald Murray, a Scottish advocate, and now one of the Scottish judges), and some of them also by Lord Webb Seymour, Dr. John Thomson, and Thomas Thomson. The first three numbers were given to the publisher—he taking the risk and defraying the charges. There was then no individual editor, but as many of us as could be got to attend used to meet in a dingy room of Willison's printing-office, in Craig's Close, where the proofs of our own articles were read over and remarked upon and attempts made also to sit in judgment on the few manuscripts which were then offered by strangers. \* \* \* Smith was by far the most timid of the confederacy and believed that, if our incognito was not strictly maintained, we could not go on a day, and this was his object for making us hold our dark divans at Willison's office, to which he insisted on our repairing singly, and by back-approaches or different lanes. He had also

so strong an impression of Brougham's indiscretion and rashness, that he would not let him be a member of our association, though wished for by all the rest. He was admitted, however, after the third number, and did more work for us than anybody. Brown took offence at some alterations I had made in a trifling article of his in the second number, and left us thus early: publishing at the same time in a magazine the fact of his secession—a step which we all deeply regretted, and thought scarcely justified by the provocation. Nothing of the kind occurred ever after."

It is amusing to compare this sober and undoubtedly accurate story with Sydney Smith's, and with Brougham's bumptious narrative,—accusing Jeffrey of timidity—from which one would suppose that Brougham was the mainstay of the enterprise and the others were satellites, content to follow his lead.

Jeffrey continued to occupy the chair until 1829, and under his management the circulation of the *Review* increased from seven hundred and eighty-nine to nearly thirteen thousand copies. Sir Walter Scott ascribed its success mainly to two circumstances,—that it was entirely uninfluenced by the booksellers and that the editor and contributors were regularly paid. The editor received at first £300 a year, afterwards £800 a year; and every contributor, rich or poor, was compelled to accept a minimum sum of £10 a sheet, afterwards increased to £16. Griffiths paid two guineas a sheet of sixteen pages, and his writers earned their money by giving about eight pages of quotation to one page of criticism; so that the *Edinburgh* was not especially generous, at first. Sir Walter's reasons may have been good, but perhaps the style and the merit of the contents and the growing demand of readers for the best

work had a good deal to do with the prosperity of the periodical.

The young man of twenty-nine who thus entered upon his career as a famous critic and a great editor, was the eldest son of George Jeffrey, a Depute Clerk of the Court of Session, and Henrietta Loudon, his wife. His mother was a daughter of John Loudon, a farmer living near Lanark. There were four other children of this marriage: Margaret, who died young; Mary, who married George Napier, a writer to the signet, on April 21, 1797; John, who went to Boston, Massachusetts, engaged in business as a merchant with his father's brother, and married a sister of John Wilkes; and Marion, who married in June, 1806, Dr. Thomas Brown, a physician in Glasgow, and who died in 1846. Francis was born in St. Charles Street, St. George's Square, Edinburgh, on October 23, 1773. His father is described as "a high Tory," "sensible and respectable, but of a gloomy temper." The mother, greatly beloved "the more so from the contrast between her and her husband," died when Francis was only thirteen years old. The boy learned dancing before he was nine, loved study better than play, and was never good at any bodily exercise except walking. He entered the High School at Edinburgh in October, 1781, remaining there until 1787. Mr. Fraser, of the School, who was the instructor of both Scott and Brougham, and who was Jeffrey's preceptor for four years,—until the youth passed under the sway of Alexander Adam, the rector,—remembered him as a "little, clever, anxious boy, always near the top of his class, and who never lost a place without shedding tears." He was at Glasgow College during the next two years, his brightness be-



coming manifest, but his father would not permit him to attend the lectures of Professor Millar, a Whig. He occupied himself much in the work of composition, and even proposed to Adam to conduct a philosophical correspondence. Returning to Edinburgh in 1789, he attended the law lectures of Hume and Dick, and was fortunate enough to be able to avail of the privileges of the excellent library of his uncle, William Morehead, who lived at Herbertshire, Stirling. In September, 1791, he entered Queen's College, Oxford, where he remained, greatly discontented, until July, 1792. In the dreary and disappointing biography which Lord Cockburn published in 1852, there are a number of quotations from his letters to members of his family betraying his dissatisfaction with the conditions then prevailing in Oxford. An unpublished letter to his sister Mary, written in April, 1792, is in my possession. It is pleasantly chatty and playful, foreshadowing the diffuseness and discursiveness of his later style, and the handwriting is abominable. "Oh, *ma soeur*," he begins, referring to a portrait which she had given him, "how much I am obliged to you—and the readiness of your compliance has doubled its value, and the elegance of the execution has multiplied it seven fold. It has restored the image to my soul and given a foundation of accuracy and reality, to the lawless embellishments of fancy." He criticises the portrait in a manner which reminds us of his later reviews, and then wanders to the subject of woman. He expresses doubts about the truth of a report concerning one of his sister's friends. "I have many admirable reasons," he says, "for my disbelief—among the rest, first, because so many of the same family have imposed upon the world of late that it

would be absurd to depend upon the veracity of this, and secondly because I am very unwilling to suppose that it should be so tho' how and why I am unwilling it may not be so easy to explain. I don't know that I ever was exactly what can be called in love with this fair coquette, and am certain there never was anything serious in my attachment to her, for her idea was so closely associated with images of laughter and vivacity that I could never conjure up her beauties but they appeared gilded with smiles and banished all the languishments of meditating and melting affection which I take to be the only basis and indication of love—but this is letting you into the very mysteries of the science,—but perpend—at the same time her idea is entire in my fancy—her image is enshrined in my heart, and I shall be horribly tempted to wish that this (illegible) may dance off in an apoplexy the night preceding his espousals if I hear anything more about him; however, I did not dedicate one tear to the probability." After this sage dissertation on love from a lad of nineteen, he proceeds to more serious subjects. "I begin to find that the company with which I am most probably destined to labor along the journey of life is not accommodated to my taste and disposition. It seems to be composed of men of moderate futures and moderate wishes and abilities and passions, and virtues and vices. Men who do not think it hard to toil and bustle like Mr. Paterson in his printing garret all day so they can have a comfortable supper and a tiff of punch after it at night; men who talk very sagely of the comforts of such a supper, who are easily induced to forgive any fraud to which a brother has been tempted, in the hope of it; men in whom business has extinguished sensation and whose wishes are

bounded with the certainty of living respectably and comfortably among their neighbors. Now this sort of life and this sort of character is exactly what I detest and avoid. If it were not given to me to ascend the towering steep of glory I should wish to descend into the low and the verdant vale of obscurity and peace—there to seek enjoyment from the practice of benevolence, from the sublimities of meditation, the gratification of taste, and the sweet simplicity of intercourse which softens the ruggedness of retirement. But in this heedless society of indifference and impertinence where a man never sees the heart of his companion, where his time is occupied in laboring out some superfluous luxury to be sparkled in the eyes of those from whose gratification he can have no pleasure, where no reward or recompence is offered to his hopes for the continued torture of a silly and turbulent crowd. In this meddling, busy region of existence I question if it be possible for happiness to find footing, and if we hear few complaints of the misery of its inhabitants, it is only because their sensations have been so totally destroyed that they have no notion or idea of the good they never knew. I am determined to make an exertion to get out of this crowd.

\* \* \* Cara, I have sent you quite a declamation, but such are the subjects which occupy me at present, and there is not a single soul here to whom they would be intelligible. The insipid and vulgarly social character is more universal than I had believed. I have found it conjoined with learning and mathematics, and pride, and even with taste and sane feeling." All of this is quite characteristic of a lively boy with a vocabulary too overflowing to be completely under control, and it is amusing to find him at the close,

straying back from the "regions of existence" to the young woman about whose prospective nuptials he was so much disturbed. "I lay my commands upon you to write me a long letter about this fair girl. If she is within hearing, tell her as much of my sentiments of her as you think consistent with my *politeness*." It all shows that college lads remain about the same from generation to generation. We may not find so much fertility of phrase in the letters of the boys of Harvard, Princeton, and Yale, to their loving sisters; but it is generally the life one is to lead, the unsympathetic surroundings, and the eternal feminine.

Although disappointed with Oxford, he studied diligently and wrote persistently, one of his papers being an essay on "Beauty," which was "the germ of his treatise on that subject in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*." One thing he strove for, which seems to us scarcely worth while: he tried to lose his Scotch dialect and accent, but did not entirely succeed. Lord Cockburn says that he was "by no means so successful in acquiring an English voice. \* \* \* What he picked up was a high-keyed accent and a sharp pronunciation;" and the solemn biographer adds that "the acquisition of a pure English accent by a full grown Scotchman is fortunately impossible." He resumed his attendance on law lectures in Edinburgh, and was admitted to practice on December 16, 1794. He had so busied himself in writing and speaking, and in the debates of the famous Speculative Society, which he joined in 1792 and where he encountered Scott, Brougham, Petty, Horner, and Henry Cockburn, that he had little or no time to build up a business, and in 1801 he told his brother that his profession had never yet brought him £100 a year. While at Oxford he had fancied

that he might become famous as a poet; he wrote to his sister that he should "never be a great man, unless it be as a poet." So besides his essays, he wrote much verse; contemplated, in 1796, a translation in the style of Cowper's *Homer*, from the *Argonautics* of Apollonius; and composed two plays, never given to the world. Cockburn tells us that he once left a manuscript poem with a publisher, but after reflection, succeeded in rescuing it before it was considered.

## II.

The young lawyer in search of a practice should be an object of commiseration. It is all so much a matter of chance that he is apt to be sadly discouraged at the outset in his quest of clients. Brains count, it is true, but brains must come into contact with opportunity to achieve success, and the time when the conjunction is to occur, if it is to occur at all, seems often remote and the waiting is tedious and exasperating. It may never come, and the failure leaves the victim in depression and penury. In any event, the aspirant experiences a long discouragement, and is again and again on the point of abandoning his profession. Jeffrey was no exception to the rule. He was a Whig, and in 1793 had written an essay on "Politicks" giving expression to views which sorely displeased his Tory father, but he was encouraged by his uncle Morehead who was inclined to liberalism. In that day Scotland was ruled by the Tories under Henry Dundas and later under Melville, and there was little chance for Jeffrey, although he had a small business by reason of some family connections. He betook himself to London in 1798, taking letters to editors, including Perry of the

"Morning Chronicle," with the notion that he could do far better in literature than in law, but it came to nothing and back he went to study science, especially chemistry. He joined a society, the "Academy of Physicks," in company with Brown, Brougham and Horner, and had serious thoughts of trying his fortune in India. His friends suggested that he should aspire to fill the chair of history in the University of Edinburgh, which A. F. Tytler had just resigned, but his political principles stood in his way. In 1801 he was a candidate for a reportership in the Court of Sessions, but was defeated. So, having no prospects to speak of and barely twenty guineas to his name, he prudently married his second cousin, Catherine Wilson, on November 1, 1801, and went to live in that "flat" on Buccleuch Place, which was to attain immortality as the birthplace of the *Edinburgh*. Sydney Smith speaks of it as being in the "eighth or ninth story," but it was really in the third; and there he dwelt until May, 1802, when he removed to the upper story of No. 62 Queen Street. It is recorded that it cost him £7-18 to furnish his study, £13-8 for his dining room, and £22-19 for his drawing room. Almost ready to look for employment in other fields, he found his opportunity in the *Review*.

In the first four numbers of the *Edinburgh*, Jeffrey had sixteen articles and Sydney Smith eighteen; in the first twenty-four numbers he had seventy-five, Smith twenty-three, and Brougham eighty. In the first number, that of October, 1802, he reviewed Southey's *Thalaba*, and to a reader of to-day his conclusions appear to be well-founded. His judgment was severe but not savagely fierce. He says with justice that "all the

productions of this author, it appears to us, bear very distinctly the impression of an amiable mind, a cultivated fancy, and a perverted taste." But the review is important chiefly from the evidence it affords of the writer's hostility to the rising school of poetry, that of Wordsworth and his friends—a hostility which survived even the ultimate victory of the new school over the old and classical formality of its predecessors. The spirit in which he approached the subject is indicated by the opening sentence: "Poetry has this much, at least, in common with religion, that its standards were fixed long ago by certain inspired writers whose authority it is no longer lawful to call in question." This positive assertion of his proposition is an example of what has been assailed as the dictatorial, *ex cathedra* method which prevailed in the *Edinburgh* for years and which reached perhaps its ultimate development in the brilliant, often unfair, but always fascinating essays of Macaulay.

A vast amount of nonsense has been uttered concerning Jeffrey's arbitrary manner and his errors with regard to the works of the new poets. One of the most common texts for the sermons of those discerning critics who are so extremely wise after the fact, is the famous "This will never do," with which he opened his review of *The Excursion*. "But has it ever done?" asks Professor Minto; "I have never heard of or seen anybody prepared to say that *The Excursion* can be read with unflagging delight. \* \* \* The truth is that most of his [Jeffrey's] criticism has been amply confirmed and justified." A pretentious and "cock-sure" writer in a modern "History of English Literature" so-called, affords an illustration of the very quality of autocratic judgment which he ascribes to Jeffrey, when he says:—

"The ministerial pronouncements of its arch-critic, Jeffrey, are such as now can only amaze. Amid the great constellation of poets who had come within his knowledge as a critic—Byron, Moore, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Crabbe, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson—he discovered permanent qualities in two only, Rogers and Campbell. He describes *Wilhelm Meister* without circumlocution as 'so much trash'. In fact he represents orthodox opinion of the day in stylish circles, elevated only to the extent of being expressed with exceptional point."

This writer sees fit to leave wholly out of view Burns and Scott and the laudatory reviews of the *Reliques of Robert Burns* in January, 1809, and of *The Lady of the Lake* in August, 1810. Tennyson's "Poems, Chiefly Lyrical" did not appear until a year after Jeffrey resigned the editorial chair. As to Keats, he overlooks the appreciative review of *Endymion*, which appeared in the *Edinburgh* in 1820, long after the publication of the cruel and excoriating criticism which disfigured the pages of the *Quarterly* in April, 1818.

In a note to the review of *Endymion*, which I cite from the volumes of collected papers (ii, 373; Edition of 1846), Jeffrey says:

"I still think that a poet of great power and promise was lost to us by the premature death of Keats \* \* \* and regret that I did not go more largely into the exposition of his merits, in the slight notice of them which I now venture to reprint. But though I cannot, with propriety, or without departing from the principle which must govern this republication, now supply the omission, I hope to be forgiven for having added a page or two to the citations—by which my opinion of those merits was then illustrated and is again left to the judgment of the reader."

As far as *Wilhelm Meister* is concerned, I am not



sure that he was wrong. It seems to be an unwarranted assertion that Jeffrey merely represented "the orthodox opinion of the day in stylish circles"—a causeless sneer at a supposed deference to the views of "stylish circles," which somewhat vulgar phrase is evidently used to designate the aristocracy of culture and of social position. It is needless to devise such a puerile theory. Jeffrey was a trained and accomplished lawyer; and like most lawyers of his type, he was disposed to find everywhere a *law*, a rule, whether of civil conduct prescribed by the supreme power of a state, or of good taste prescribed by those whose decisions, respected and followed in the past, had come to possess in their own realm the binding force of law. Men of his profession are almost always conservative, often to excess, over-reluctant to countenance changes which may be advantageous and which moreover are inevitable; for all laws must change with the spirit and the temper of the times.

In fact, however, this sapient scribbler borrowed his judgment from Sir Leslie Stephen's charming essay, "The First Edinburgh Reviewers,"\* which is full of that delightful and easy book-discussion so fascinating to a reader who enjoys literary criticism. Stephen was, in that essay, a little, if ever so little, severe with Jeffrey, and his article on Jeffrey in the *National Dictionary of Biography* is much more favorable in its tone. Stephen says of him in the essay: "Every critic has a sacred and inalienable right to blunder at times; but Jeffrey's blundering is amazingly systematic and comprehensive." He illustrates this by a quotation from the last of Jeffrey's poetical critiques (October,

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\*Hours in a Library, ii, 241 (1894).

1829) where the reviewer, he says, sums up his critical experience. "He doubts whether Mrs. Hemans, whom he is reviewing at the time, will be immortal. 'The tuneful quartos of Southey,' he says, 'are already little better than lumber,' and the rich melodies of Keats and Shelley, and the fantastical emphasis of Wordsworth, and the plebeian pathos of Crabbe, are melting fast from the field of vision. The novels of Scott have put out his poetry. Even the splendid strains of Moore are fading into distance and dimness, except when they have been married to immortal music; and the blazing star of Byron himself is receding from its place of pride." This does not impress one as a monument of error. Surely every word of it is as true to-day as it was in 1829, except that there has been a recrudescence of "the rich melodies of Keats and Shelley," and of Byron, whose star was assuredly almost obscured for many years, although of late it seems to be again shining with a good deal of its former lustre. The gravamen of the charge of blundering which is preferred against Jeffrey is, to use the words of Sir Leslie Stephen, his assertion that "the two who show least marks of decay are—of all people in the world—Rogers and Campbell!" Let us reason together a little about this censure.

Every lawyer knows that in dealing with what a man says, it is important to know exactly what he said. What was it that Jeffrey said about Rogers and Campbell which has brought down upon him the avalanche of blame showered by Stephen and Scribner? Dr. Winchester says that it has been "quoted by everybody who has written anything on Jeffrey since Christopher North quoted it first in *Blackwood*." The trouble is that everybody does not quote it; almost

everybody attempts to paraphrase it and blunders in the attempt. This is exactly what Jeffrey wrote:—

“The two who have the longest withstood this rapid withering of the laurel, and with the least mark of decay on their branches, are Rogers and Campbell; neither of them, it may be remarked, voluminous writers, and both distinguished rather for their fine taste and consummate elegance of their writings, than for that fiery passion, and disdainful vehemence which seemed for a time to be so much more in favor with the public.”

It may be permitted to say that in 1829 this was all quite true; no one has denied it. It is very far from an assertion that Rogers and Campbell will be “the sole enduring relics from an age of Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, and Byron.” Jeffrey says not a word about what may happen in the future. Sir Leslie appears to have had a slight degree of compunction about his conclusion, because he attempts to sustain his severity by the remark that “this summary was republished in 1843, by which time the true proportions of the great reputations of the period were becoming more obvious to an ordinary observer.” But Jeffrey was not writing in 1843; he was simply repeating what he wrote in 1829. Would Sir Leslie have had him change it? His principle in the reproduction is referred to in the note about Keats, heretofore quoted. In the well-known words of Jeffrey, “This will never do.” It must be remembered, too, that Rogers was a dearly beloved friend, and critics are human; and I dare to say that there are even now verses of Campbell which are familiar to thousands who do not know a line of Keats or of Shelley. Moreover, if the modest statement of his views was a

blunder, we must remember what Sir Leslie well says, "criticism is a still more perishable commodity than poetry," and if you censure one critic for an occasional error, you will have to condemn them all. Stephen does admit in a letter to Mrs. Jackson, in 1877, that "Jeffrey, too, said a true thing or two about Wordsworth." But was Sir Leslie, after all, a very competent judge? His biographer, Mr. Maitland, in *Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen* (1906) says: —

"Stephen, we are told, after his death, did not really care for poetry any more than Jeffrey, and consequently was not fully qualified to criticise it. Of course not; he was a philosopher."

Hence we may distrust the capacity of Stephen to decide about Jeffrey's views of poetry. The devoted admirers of Wordsworth never quite forgave Jeffrey for what he said about their idol. Crabbe Robinson records in his Diary a talk with Empson, in which the latter relates that Jeffrey had lately told him that so many people had thought highly of Wordsworth, that he was resolved to reperuse his poems and see if he had anything to retract. He found nothing to retract except, perhaps, a contemptuous and flippant phrase or two. Empson believed that Jeffrey's distaste for Wordsworth was honest,—mere uncongeniality of mind. Jeffrey did acknowledge that he was wrong in his treatment of Lamb. Robinson notes, in April, 1835, his meeting Jeffrey at dinner. "Jeffrey," he says, "is a sharp and clever-looking man, and in spite of my dislike to his name, he did not on the whole displease me. His treatment of Wordsworth would not allow me to like him, had he been greater by far than he was. And, therefore, when he said,

'I was always an admirer of Wordsworth,' I could not repress the unseemly remark, 'You had a singular way of showing your admiration'."\*

In the *Thalaba* review, Jeffrey vigorously attacks the "affectation of great simplicity and familiarity of language," which was characteristic of the new school of poets; "the perverted taste for simplicity" he calls it. He seems to have been fond of the expression "perverted taste." He is moved to bitter words when he refers to their "splenetic and idle discontent with the existing institutions of society." His own feelings were so far "aristocratic" that he was unable to believe that while the princely and the wealthy are to be strongly condemned for acts of vice and profligacy, the members of "the lower orders of society" are to be excused and pitied for like acts, because they are "but the helpless victims or instruments" of the disorders attending the vicious constitution of society. He is guilty of such offensive and unpopular suggestions as that "the same apology ought certainly to be admitted for the wealthy, as for the needy offender. They are subject alike to the overruling influence of necessity, and equally affected by the miserable condition of society. If it be natural for a poor man to murder and rob in order to make himself comfortable, it is no less natural for a rich man to gormandise and domineer, in order to have the full use of his riches. Wealth is just as valid an excuse for the one class of vices as indigence is for the other." Such sentiments, if uttered in these times of ours, would surely subject the offender to the scornful rebukes of our modern philosophers of the press, who regard it

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\*Diary, iii, 65.

as criminal to be rich—unless the fortune was acquired by printing newspapers, or was inherited by an editor, and whose denunciations of large fortunes are accompanied by abject deference to the possessors of them when in their personal presence.

The review of *The Reliques of Robert Burns* (January, 1809) is a fine example of the discriminating power of the critic. Scotchman as he was, Burns was for him no fetish to be adored blindly, whose every verse was to be raved about because the poet was a genius. He did not belong to that class of men who cannot believe that Shakespeare or Milton were ever dull; or that there are lines in the Holy Scriptures which might well be blotted out; or that George Washington never did a foolish thing or Benedict Arnold a good one. He recognized the truth that even the great have their failings, as they must have, being human; all the more lovable, more honorable perhaps for having them. After the usual introductory essay of the day, treating of the relative advantages of great culture and of humble beginnings in the making of a true poet, and arriving at the conclusion that such a poet may well be unencumbered by "the pretended helps of extended study and literary society," he calls attention to the harshness and acrimony of Burns's invective, his want of polish or at least of respectfulness in the general tone of his gallantry, his contempt or affectation of contempt for prudence, decency, and regularity; his frequent mistake of mere exaggeration and violence for force and sublimity; and then he says:

"With the allowances and exceptions we have now stated, we think Burns entitled to the rank of a great and original genius. He has in all his compositions

great force of conception; and great spirit and animation in its expression. He has taken a large range through the region of Fancy and naturalized himself in almost all her climates. He has great humor—great powers of description—great pathos—and great discrimination of character. Almost everything that he says has spirit and originality; and everything that he says well, is characterized by a charming facility, which gives a grace even to occasional rudeness, and communicates to the reader a delightful sympathy with the spontaneous soaring and conscious inspiration of the poet.”

What he wrote of *The Lady of the Lake* in the number for August, 1810, shows his capacity of estimating the real value of popular works, uninfluenced by personal friendship or by the voice of the multitude. He gives a careful study of the elements of popularity in poetry, and finds the great secret of Scott’s popularity and the leading characteristic of his poetry to consist “in this, that he has made more use of common topics, images, and expressions than any original poet of later times; and, at the same time, displayed more genius and originality than any recent author who has worked in the same materials. By the latter peculiarity, he has entitled himself to the admiration of every description of readers;—by the former he is recommended in an especial manner to the inexperienced—at the hazard of some little offence to the more cultivated and fastidious.” He says further:

“There is nothing, in Mr. Scott, of the severe and majestic style of Milton—or of the terse and fine composition of Pope,—or of the elaborate elegance and melody of Campbell,—or even of the flowing and redundant diction of Southey. But there is a medley of bright images and glowing words, set carelessly

and loosely together—a diction, tinged successively with the careless richness of Shakespeare, the harshness and antique simplicity of the old romances, the homeliness of vulgar ballads and anecdotes, and the sentimental glitter of the most modern poetry—passing from the borders of the ludicrous to those of the sublime—alternately minute and energetic—sometimes artificial, and frequently negligent—but always full of spirit and vivacity—abounding in images that are striking, at first sight, to minds of every contexture—and never expressing a sentiment which it can cost the most ordinary reader any exertion to comprehend.”

Jeffrey praises Scott's vivifying spirit of strength and animation; his ease of production; his singular talent for description and “especially for the description of scenes abounding in *motion* or *action* of any kind”; the manner in which “with a few bold and abrupt strokes he finishes a most spirited outline, and then instantly kindles it by the sudden light and color of some moral affection;” the “air of freedom and nature which he has contrived to impart to most of his distinguished characters, and with which no poet more modern than Shakespeare has ventured to represent persons of such dignity.” At the same time, he remarks that Scott has “dazzled the reader with the splendor, and even warmed him with the transient heat of various affections; but he has nowhere fairly kindled him with enthusiasm, or melted him into tenderness;” and he thinks it quite obvious that “Mr. Scott has not aimed at writing either in a pure or a very consistent style.”

He had not written of *Marmion* so approvingly, although it was brought out by Constable, who was publishing the *Edinburgh*. It is said that Jeffrey rather characteristically sent the article to Scott with a note saying that he was coming to dinner on the following



Tuesday. Scott felt the sting of the review, but tried to hide his feelings. Mrs. Scott, however, was but frigidly polite, and as Jeffrey was taking leave forgot even her cold politeness, saying in her broken English:

"Well, guid night, Mr. Jeffrey; dey tell me you have abused Scott in the *Review*; and I hope Mr. Constable has paid you well for writing it."

These quotations have been given partly to afford a glimpse of Jeffrey when he was at his best and partly to refute the assumption that he was always finding fault and wounding the feelings of authors. He had, it is true, some very decided views about poetry, which in those earlier days of the nineteenth century was a serious matter. People read the galloping verses of Scott then as eagerly as in later times they devoured novels. But "suddenly and without any warning," as Besant says, "the people of Great Britain left off reading poetry." It must be observed that both of the poets so favorably regarded by Jeffrey were Scotchmen like himself; when he came to deal with Englishmen he was possibly open to the charge of undue severity. Yet Southey was not much vexed by the review of *Thalaba*. He called it "dishonest" in some of its assertions, and justly remarks that the first part, evidently an answer to Wordsworth's Preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, is utterly irrelevant to *Thalaba*. "The review altogether is a good one," he writes to a friend, and adds, with regard to some of the adverse criticism, "when any Scotchman's book shall come to be reviewed, then see what the Edinburgh critics will say." A review of *Madoc* was published in the number for October, 1805; it was both severe

and complimentary. It was sent to Southey before it appeared, and Jeffrey wrote to Horner:

"Southey is to be here to-day with P. Elmsley. I mean to let him read my review of *Madoc* before I put myself in the way of meeting with him. He is too much a man of the world, I believe, in spite of his poesy, to decline seeing me, whatever he may think of the critic."

They did meet, and Southey wrote to Will Taylor, on October 22, 1805:

"I have seen Jeffrey, etc. I met him in good humor, being by God's blessing, of a happy temper. Having seen him, it would be impossible to be angry at anything so diminutive. We talked upon the question of taste, on which we are at issue; he is a mere child upon that subject. I never met with a man who was so easy to checkmate."

Southey evidently felt the censure more keenly than he would have been willing to confess. As Cockburn says:

"Jeffrey's being a child in taste, and easily checkmated in discussion will probably strike those who knew him as novelties in his character."

The fact that if Jeffrey made any mistake in the review of *Madoc*, it was in lauding the poem too highly. It was one of poor Southey's stupendous failures.

Dr. Winchester thinks that Jeffrey's criticism "has always a certain hard common-sense. It is clear and sane, level to the comprehension of everybody. There is nothing subtle in it. He never goes much below the surface." The learned essayist then calls Jeffrey dogmatic and superficial, and says that he was unable to apply any historical method in criticism; inconsistent,

with taste narrowed in its range on the one side by that hard common sense of his, and on the other by "a rather prim sentimentality." Dr. Winchester seems disposed to find fault with Jeffrey because in the first quarter of the nineteenth century he did not write in the manner of the first decade of the twentieth. But it is not easy to understand why he should accuse Jeffrey of ignoring Keats because "the *Edinburgh* had no word of recognition for him, and only broke silence in 1820, when his brief career was closed." The article appeared in August, 1820, and Keats died in his twenty-sixth year, in February, 1821; so that the delay was not extraordinary. *Endymion* first appeared in 1818 and attracted little attention at the time. The "Lamia, Isabella, the Eve of St. Agnes, and other Poems," which was the immediate occasion of the review, was published early in July, 1820. So that to the ordinary mind it appears that one must be extremely anxious to find fault who would censure Jeffrey for neglecting Keats.

In my boyhood, Chambers' *Cyclopaedia of English Literature* was regarded as a trustworthy guide, and I am disposed to believe that it deserved its reputation. Its verdict upon Jeffrey bears the impress of fairness and candor. "There is some ground," says the impartial writer who has manifestly no desire to be "smart" or censorious, "for charging upon the *Edinburgh Review*, in its earlier career, an absence of proper respect and enthusiasm for the works of living genius. Where no prepossession of the kind intervened, Jeffrey was an admirable critic. If he was not profound, he was interesting and graceful. His dissertations on the works of Cowper, Crabbe, Byron, Scott, and Campbell, and on the earlier and greater lights of our poetry, as

well as those on moral science, national manners, and views of actual life, are expressed with great eloquence and originality, and in a fine spirit of humanity. His powers of perception and analysis were quick, subtle and penetrating, and withal comprehensive; while his brilliant imagination invested subjects that in ordinary hands would have been dry and uninviting, with strong interest and attraction. He seldom gave full scope to his feelings and sympathies, but they occasionally broke forth with inimitable effect and kindled up the pages of his criticism."

The same writer, later on, observes with much force, that "as a literary critic, we may advert to the singular taste and judgment with Lord Jeffrey exercised in making selections from the works he reviewed, and interweaving them, as it were, with the text of his criticism. Whatever was picturesque, solemn, pathetic, or sublime, caught his eye, and was thus introduced to a new and vastly extended circle of readers, besides furnishing matter for various collections of extracts and innumerable school exercises. The chief defect of his writing is the occasional diffuseness and carelessness of his style. He wrote as he spoke, with great rapidity and with a flood of illustration." I am not sure that an author who "writes as he speaks" is not, after all, as satisfactory as one who observes the law of reticence with severity and strictness. Surely his work is readable, and as the eye runs rapidly over the printed page, no time is wasted. The colloquial style is, however, not favored by every reader. Many prefer that their mental pabulum should be supplied in condensed tablets, and prefer the concise, the epigrammatic method.

Some remarks of Jeffrey, in his review of Camp-

bell's *Specimens of the British Poets* (1819), impress me as significant of his methods of judgment. He says:

"As the materials of enjoyment and instruction accumulate around us, more and more, we fear, must thus be daily rejected and left to waste. For while our tasks lengthen, our lives remain as short as ever; and the calls on our time multiply, while our time itself is flying swiftly away. This superfluity and abundance of our treasures, therefore, necessarily render much of them worthless; and the veriest accidents may, in such a case, determine what part shall be preserved, and what thrown away and neglected. When an army is *decimated*, the very bravest may fall; and many poets, worthy of eternal remembrance, have probably been forgotten, merely because there was not room in our memories for all."

And looking forward to 1919, he says:

"Our living poets will then be nearly as old as Pope and Swift are at present,—but there will stand between them and that generation nearly ten times as much fresh and fashionable poetry as is now interposed between us and those writers;—and if Scott and Byron and Campbell have already cast Pope and Swift a good deal into the shade, in what form and dimensions are they themselves likely to be presented in the eyes of our great grandchildren? The thought, we own, is a little appalling;—and we confess we see nothing better to imagine than that they may find a comfortable place in some new collection of specimens—the centenary of the present publication. There—if the future editor have anything like the indulgence and veneration for antiquity of his predecessor—there shall posterity still hang with rapture on the half of Campbell,—and the fourth part of Byron,—and the sixth of Scott,—and the scattered tythes of Crabbe,—and the three per cent. of Southey,—while some good-natured critic shall sit in our

mouldering chair, and more than half prefer them to those by whom they have been superseded!—It is an hyperbole of good-nature, however, we fear, to ascribe to them even those dimensions at the end of a century. After a lapse of two hundred and fifty years, we are afraid to think of the space they may have shrunk into. We have no Shakespeare, alas! to shed a never-setting light on his contemporaries!—and if we continue to write and rhyme at the present rate for two hundred years longer, there must be some new art of *short-hand reading* invented,—or all reading will be given up in despair.”

The error he made was in supposing that in the twentieth century, poetry would be a matter of interest to the general reader. We know that nobody cares much now for poetry; it has ceased to be a subject of concern to any but the few; if it is read at all, it is only by the student of literature, for the multitude of men find their food for thought in science, sociology and fiction. The man at the club would stare in hopeless surprise at any reference to Pope, or Crabbe, or even Campbell, modern as he is, and say to himself that his interlocutor was a queer old antediluvian, and a mere burrower in the rubbish of long ago.

Naturally Jeffrey, as the responsible editor, was compelled sometimes to suffer vicariously for the offense of others. Everyone knows the biting review of “Hours of Idleness,” which Brougham wrote for the number of January, 1808, and how Byron fumed furiously in the somewhat labored satire of “English Bards and Scottish Reviewers,” pouring forth his vitriolic wrath upon Jeffrey in particular. But Byron repented of his assault when in later years he came to know the worth of the man he libelled. He had said:

"Believe a woman or an epitaph,  
Or any other thing that's false, before  
You trust in critics, who themselves are sore;  
Or yield one single thought to be misled  
By Jeffrey's heart or Lambe's Bœotian head."

In 1816 he wrote:

"This was not just. Neither the heart nor the head of these gentlemen are at all what they are here represented. At the time this was written, I was personally not acquainted with either."

Later in the satire he exclaimed:

"Health to immortal Jeffrey! once in name  
England could boast a judge almost the same!"

To compare Jeffrey with Jeffreys seems to have been a favorite occupation of wounded authors in those days: each one appeared to think that his conceit was original. Byron goes on to give vent to a tirade somewhat tedious, in the course of which he makes much of the Moore duel, described later on. But in his Diary (1814) he recorded his recantation. "I have often," he says, "since my return to England, heard Jeffrey most highly commended by those who knew him, for things independent of his talents. I admired him for *this*—not because he has praised me, but because he is, perhaps, the only man who, under the relations in which he and I stand or stood with regard to each other, would have had the liberality to act thus: none but a great soul dared hazard it—a little scribbler would have gone on cavilling to the end of the chapter." Jeffrey, in 1812, reviewing the first and second cantos of *Childe Harold*, had referred to the scurrilous stings of the satire by saying that "personalities so outrageous were only injurious to their

author." Byron tried to make amends in the tenth canto of *Don Juan* by saying:

"And all our little feuds, at least all *mine*,  
 Dear Jeffrey, once my most redoubted foe  
 (As far as rhyme and criticism combine  
 To make such puppets of us things below,)  
 Are over; Here's a health to 'Auld Lang Syne!'  
 I do not know you, and may never know  
 Your face—but you have acted on the whole  
 Most nobly, and I own it from my soul.

And when I use the phrase of 'Auld Lang Syne!'  
 'Tis not addressed to you—the more's the pity  
 For me, for I would rather take my wine  
 With you, than aught (save Scott) in your proud  
 city."

Miss Anna Seward, that plump Swan of Lichfield whose story has been told so charmingly of late by E. V. Lucas, was plainly enraged when she wrote to Sir Walter Scott on June 20, 1806: "Not even you can teach me to esteem him whom you call your little friend *Jeffrey*, the Edinburgh Reviewer. *Jeffries* ought to have been his name, since so similar his nature. On his self-placed bench of decision on poetic works, he is all that Jefferies was when tyranny had thrown the judicial robe on his shoulder."

It was in this year, 1806, when Jeffrey made such an attack upon the *Odes and Epistles* of Thomas Moore that a rather comical duel followed, which began by Moore's telling Jeffrey a funny story and ended by the timely arrival of the police who haled the Scotchman and the Irishman, with their seconds, Horner and Hume, to Bow Street, where all began to talk on literary subjects. "But whatever was the topic,"



writes Moore in his voluminous *Memoirs*, "Jeffrey, I recollect, expatiated upon it with all his peculiar fluency and eloquence; and I can now most vividly recall him to my memory, as he lay upon his back on a form which stood beside the wall, pouring volubly forth his fluent but most oddly pronounced diction, and dressing his subject out in every variety of array that an ever rich and ready wardrobe of phraseology could supply." They took a liking each to the other and became warm friends; and Moore records with pride how Jeffrey said to him, twenty-one years later, referring to the *Life of Sheridan*, "Here is a convincing proof that you can think and reason solidly and manfully, and treat the gravest and most important subjects in a manner worthy of them."

The poet had some provocation, for in the review of his poems (*Edinburgh Review*, No. XVI., July, 1806), Jeffrey had written of him as "the most licentious of modern versifiers, and the most poetical of the propagators of impiety," adding what Moore understood to be a charge of mercenary motives. The duelists met at Chalk Farm, but the police interfered and it was found that one of the pistols had no ball in it. So Byron, in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* could not refrain from saying:

"Can none remember that eventful day,  
That ever glorious, almost fatal fray,  
When Little's leadless pistol met his eye  
And Bow Street myrmidons stood laughing by?"

Moore insisted that *his* pistol was loaded, and tried to send a challenge to Byron, but the friend to whom it was entrusted contrived to forget all about it. Theodore Hook, in the *Man of Sorrow* perpetrated this epigram:

"When Anacreon would fight, as the poets have said,  
A reverse he display'd in his vapor,  
For while all his poems were loaded with *lead*,  
His pistols were loaded with *paper*!  
For excuses, Anacreon old custom many thank,  
Such a salvo he would not abuse,  
For the cartridge, by rule, is always made blank,  
Which is fired away at Reviews."

The whole story is told fully in Moore's *Memoirs* as well as by Cockburn, and it is the subject of comment in many contemporary works. In Clayden's account of "Rogers and his Contemporaries," other details are furnished. The banker-poet is brought into the field. "Jeffrey," says Clayden, "had written a slashing review of Moore's *Epistles, Odes and other Poems*, in the *Edinburgh Review* for July, 1806, and was apparently conscious that he had done Moore injustice. Rogers met him at Lord Fincastle's at dinner in the early summer, and the conversation turned on Moore. Lord Fincastle described the new poet as having great amenity of manner, and Jeffrey laughingly replied, 'I am afraid he would not show much amenity to me.' The insult and challenge followed soon after this conversation, and a meeting was arranged at Chalk Farm. William Spencer had heard of it, and had told the police, and, when the combatants were about to fire, the police appeared and took them all off to the station. Moore sent for Spencer to bail him, but Rogers had heard of the arrest and was on the spot in time to give the necessary security. This quarrel of two friends gave Rogers an opportunity of playing his favorite part of peacemaker. He carried messages between the combatants, containing, as Moore says, those formalities of explanation which the world requires, and arranged that they should meet at his

house." Rogers, in his *Table Talk*, gives a brief account of his relation to the duel, and adds: "The poet and the critic were mutually reconciled by means of Horner and myself: they shook hands with each other in the garden behind my house." They may have shaken hands there, but it is doubtful whether Rogers really had as much to do with the reconciliation as all this implies. In Clayden's book is given in full the letter of Jeffrey to Rogers, written from Edinburgh, July 30, 1819, in which his generous liberality is exhibited. He says:

"I have been very much shocked and disturbed by observing in the newspapers the great pecuniary calamity which has fallen on our excellent friend Moore, and not being able to get any distinct information either as to its extent, or its probable consequences, from anybody here, I have thought it best to relieve my anxiety by applying to you, whose kind concern in him must both have made you acquainted with all the particulars, and willing, I hope, to satisfy the enquiries of one who sincerely shares in that concern. \* \* \* I have, unfortunately, not a great deal of money to spare. But if it should be found practicable to relieve him from this unmerited distress by any contribution, I beg leave to say that I shall think it an honor to be allowed to take share in it to the extent of 300 *l.* or 500 *l.*, and that I could *advance* more than double the sum named above upon any reasonable security of ultimate repayment, however long postponed."

In his own account of the Moore affair, Jeffrey, writing to his friend, George Bell (August 22, 1806), says:

"Moore agreed to withdraw his defiance; and then I had no hesitation in assuring him (as I was ready to have done at the beginning, if he had applied amica-

bly) that in writing the review I considered myself merely as the censor of the morality of his book, and that I intended to assert nothing as to the personal motives or personal character of the author, of whom I had no knowledge at the time. \* \* \* We have since breakfasted together very lovingly. \* \* \* You are too severe upon the little man. He has behaved with great spirit throughout this business. He really is not profligate, and is universally regarded, even by those who resent the style of his poetry, as an innocent, good-hearted, idle fellow. \* \* \* We were very near going to Hamburgh after we had been bound over here; but it is much better as it is. I am glad to have gone through this scene, both because it satisfies me that my nerves are good enough to enable me to act in conformity to my notions of propriety without any suffering, and because it also assures me that I am really as little in love with life as I have been for some time in the habit of professing."

This indifference to life arose from the depression caused by the death of his sister Mary (Mrs. Napier) and by a still greater affliction which for a time threatened to drive him from his literary and professional work. His wife, whom he loved devotedly, died on August 8, 1805.

The *Edinburgh* was not destined to continue long without a rival. Its open disapproval of the war with France, rather than its advocacy of domestic reforms, not only aroused the indignation of the Tories but offended many of the moderate men of the class who consider it to be unpatriotic to oppose a government during the pendency of a conflict in which the nation may be at the time engaged, however they may have deplored the beginning of such a conflict. We had examples of our own in the Civil War of 1861-1865, and in the Spanish War of 1898. The final offense which

provoked the loyal Britons was a review by Jeffrey (with some help from Brougham) of Don Pedro Ceballos's account of the French Usurpation in Spain, which appeared in the number for October, 1808. Jeffrey "dared to despair of what was then called the regeneration of Spain; and this at the very moment when the hearts of most of the English people were agitated with delight in the belief that this glorious change had already begun and that the Peninsula was henceforth to be inhabited by a population of patriots."\* Jeffrey was more accurate in his forecast than he was a little later when he wrote to Horner that his "honest impression" was that Bonaparte would be "in Dublin in about fifteen months, perhaps sooner." In that event, he said he would "try to go to America." The Tories brought out their *Quarterly Review* in February, 1809, and Sir Walter Scott went over to it. It does not seem to have injured the *Edinburgh* seriously. When Jeffrey saw the first number he wrote:

"I have seen the *Quarterly* this morning. It is an inspired work, compared with the pen prattle of Cumberland. But I do not think it very formidable; and if it were not for our offences, I should have no fear about its consequences."

In March he wrote to Horner:

"Tell me what you hear, and what you think of this new *Quarterly*; and do not let yourself imagine that I feel any unworthy jealousy, and still less any unworthy fear, on the occasion. My natural indolence would have been better pleased not to be always in sight of an alert and keen antagonist. But I do rejoice at the prospect of this kind of literature, which seems to be more and more attended to than any other, being

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\*Cockburn's *Life of Jeffrey*. I-192.

generally improved in quality, and shall be found to have set an example."

This was manifestly said in all sincerity, and Jeffrey was shrewd enough to perceive that rivalry and competition would advance the fortunes of his *Review* instead of retarding them. In fact, the *Edinburgh* was not at first particularly Whiggish. Scott, who was anything but a Whig, had been a contributor for years before the Ceballos article appeared, and as late as 1807 advised Southey to follow his example. In November, 1808, Scott wrote to his brother-in-law, saying that Jeffrey had "offered terms of pacification, engaging that no party politics should again appear in his 'Review'," but after this letter had been given out in Lockhart's *Life*, Jeffrey insisted, in the preface to his collected essays, that he had been misunderstood and added that he had told Sir Walter that he had for six years regarded politics as "the right leg" of the *Review*. The real attitude of Jeffrey is shown by a letter which he wrote to Horner, on December 6, 1808, quoted by Horner in his *Memoirs* (I. 464) when, asking help in the day of need, he told Horner to write anything, "only no party politics, and nothing but exemplary moderation and impartiality on all politics." In fact, while his contributors were all inclined to liberalism, Jeffrey himself wrote very few political essays. His tendency was Whiggish, but he was not enthusiastic; he was not a sympathizer with Cobbett or Bentham, and even thought that Carlyle was too much in earnest. The radicals, Sir Leslie Stephen says, regarded him as a mere trimmer. So he met with the approval of neither faction of extremists, the usual fate of honest men who have a strong sense of justice and abhor tyranny whether of the mob or of the aristocracy.

In 1803 he decided not to accept a professorship of moral and political science in a college at Calcutta, although, according to Horner, his professional income was then only about £240. In that year he "became an ensign in a volunteer regiment, with a strong conviction that an invasion was imminent, but showed so little military aptitude that he was never at home in his uniform, and could hardly, according to Cockburn, "face his company to the right or left." His social success, however, was marked, but he was despondent, as we have seen, after the death of his sister and of his wife, following the loss of his child, born in September, 1802, and dying in October of the same year. He bravely worked on and with courage pursued his way both in society and in his literary and professional labors. His practice grew, and, although he was neither learned nor profound, he was successful before juries and often argued appeals in the House of Lords. After 1807 he had, as Cockburn says, an "unchallenged monopoly on one side," before the general assembly, and when the jury system for the trial of issues of fact in civil cases was introduced in 1816, he was employed in almost every trial. His manner was artificial, he had a tendency to refine too much, but he had an excellent memory for details, much sagacity, and a charm of manner which was most effective before juries and popular bodies. He was engaged in the trial of Mac-laren and Bird for sedition in 1817, and defended successfully several criminals. So his repute as a lawyer increased in spite of his editorial occupations.

In 1810 he removed from Queen Street to 92 George Street, which was his Edinburgh home until he moved to 24 Moray Place in 1827. In 1810 he became acquainted with a daughter of Charles Wilkes

of New York, who was visiting Scotland in company with her aunt. She was a grand-niece of John Wilkes and a near connection of Captain Charles Wilkes, long years afterwards famous as an explorer and as the captor of Mason and Slidell. He fell in love with her, and after her return to America decided to go there, leaving his clients to look after themselves as best they might and entrusting the *Review* to his friends. He had a most uncomfortable voyage, but reached New York in October, 1813, and married Miss Wilkes very soon afterwards, returning to England in February, 1814.

It may not be without interest to Americans to remember that he never shared in the hostility towards them which was prevalent in his time. Perhaps his personal experiences in the United States in 1813-1814 and his marriage to an American woman were accountable in part for his friendliness. On his visit he had two interviews with the men whom Lord Cockburn—with the fine indifference of a Briton to the names of our public officials—calls “Mr. Munroe, the Secretary” and “Mr. Maddison, the President,” with whom he discussed fully the problems of the pending war; and he dined with the President.\*

Naturally his views were not in accord with those of Madison and Monroe, but the debate appears, by Jeffrey’s account, to have been conducted with dignity and courtesy although without any practical result. The truth is that neither party to the “War of 1812”

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\*Cockburn, I., 226-227. It is curious that long years afterwards, Sir Alexander James Cockburn, at a dinner, asked a relative of mine why Chief Justice Chase did not come over to England, as they would be glad to do him honor. Chase had died some time before, but the Lord Chief Justice had not heard of it.



could afford to boast very much about the merits of its cause, and both of the belligerents were wrong in many ways. In May, 1820, Jeffrey published an article in the *Edinburgh* on the jealousies between America and Great Britain, of which Cockburn says:

"He had constantly endeavored to remove the irritations which made these two kindred nations think so uncharitably and so absurdly of each other."

When Jeffrey reprinted the paper in his *Selected Contributions* he added in a note:

"There is no one feeling, having public concerns for its object, with which I have been so long and so deeply impressed, as that of the vast importance of our maintaining friendly, and even cordial relations, with the free, peaceful, moral, and industrious States of America—a condition upon which I cannot help thinking that not only our own freedom and prosperity, but that of the better part of the world, will ultimately be found to be more and more dependent."

Like many Britons, he was at his worst in a foreign country and appears to have created an impression wholly erroneous regarding his personality. George Ticknor, who met him in the United States, and afterwards again in Edinburgh in 1819, says in his *Journals* that Jeffrey "both here and in his own house and all society, was a much more domestic, quiet sort of person that we found him in America." One of the best pen portraits of him is given by Ticknor in a letter to his friend, Charles S. Davies of Portland, dated on February 8, 1814,\* in which he says:

"I had seriously intended to send you a sketch of the Abraham of the *Edinburgh Review*, while I was

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\*Life, Letters and Journals of George Ticknor, I., 43.

running over with speculations and opinions about him.\* \* \*

"You are to imagine \* \* \* before you, a short, stout little gentleman, about five and a half feet high, with a very red face, black hair, and black eyes. You are to suppose him to possess a very gay and animated countenance, and you are to see in him all the restlessness of a will-o'-wisp, and all that fitful irregularity in his movements which you have heretofore appropriated to the pasteboard Merry Andrews whose limbs are jerked about with a wire. These you are to interpret as the natural indication of the impetuous and impatient character which a further acquaintance develops.

"He enters a room with a countenance so satisfied, and a step so light and almost fantastic, that all your previous impressions of the dignity and severity of the *Edinburgh Review* are immediately put to flight, and, passing at once to the opposite extreme, you might, perhaps, imagine him to be frivolous, vain, and supercilious. He accosts you, too, with a freedom and familiarity which may, perhaps, put you at your ease, and render conversation unceremonious; but which, as I observed in several instances, were not very tolerable to those who had always been accustomed to the delicacy and decorum of refined society. Mr. Jeffrey, therefore, I remarked, often suffered from the prepossessions of those he met, before any regular conversation commenced, and almost before the tones of his voice were heard. It is not possible, however, to be long in his presence without understanding something of his real character—for the same promptness and assurance which mark his entrance into a room carry him at once into conversation. The moment a topic is suggested—no matter what or by whom—he comes forth, and the first thing you observe is his singular fluency.

"He bursts upon you with a torrent of remarks, and you are for some time so much amused with his earnestness and volubility, that you forget to ask yourself

whether they have either appropriateness or meaning. When, however, you come to consider his remarks closely, you are surprised to find that, notwithstanding his prodigious rapidity, the current of his language never flows faster than the current of his thoughts. You are surprised to discover that he is never, like other impetuous speakers, driven to amplification and repetition in order to gain time to collect and arrange his ideas; you are surprised to find that, while his conversation is poured forth in such a fervor and tumult of eloquence that you can scarcely follow or comprehend it, it is still as compact and logical as if he were contending for a victory in the schools or for a decision from the bench.

"After all this, however, you do not begin to understand Mr. Jeffrey's character; for it is not until you become interested in the mere discussion, until you forget his earnestness, his volubility, and his skill, that you begin to feel something of the full extent of his powers. You do not, till then, see with how strong and steady a hand he seizes the subject, and with what ease, as well as dexterity, he turns and examines it on every side. You are not, until then, convinced that he but plays with what is the labor of ordinary minds, and that half his faculties are not called into exercise by what you at first suppose would tax his whole strength. And, after all, you are able to estimate him, not by what you witness,—for he is always above a topic which can be made the subject of conversation,—but by what you imagine he would be able to do if he were excited by a great and difficult subject and a powerful adversary.

"With all this, he preserves in your estimation a transparent simplicity of character. You are satisfied that he does nothing for effect and show; you see that he never chooses the subject, and never *leads* the conversation in such a way as best to display his own powers and acquirements. You see that he is not ambitious of being thought a wit; and that, when he has been most fortunate in his argument or illustration, he

never looks round, as some great men do, to observe what impression he has produced upon his hearers. In short, you could not be in his presence an hour without being convinced that he has neither artifice nor affectation; that he does not talk from the pride of skill or of victory, but because his mind is full to overflowing, and conversation is his relief and pleasure.

"But notwithstanding everybody saw and acknowledged these traits in Mr. Jeffrey's character, he was very far from winning the good opinion of all. There were still not a few who complained that he was supercilious, and that he thought himself of a different and higher order from those he met; that he had been used to dictate until he was unwilling to listen, and that he had been fed upon admiration until it had become common food, and he received it as a matter of course.

"There is some ground for this complaint, but I think the circumstances of the case should take its edge from censure. It seems to me that Mr. Jeffrey has enough of that amiable feeling from which politeness and the whole system of the *petite morale* springs. But that he has not learned the necessary art of distributing it in judicious proportions. He shows the same degree of deference to every one he meets; and, therefore, while he flatters by his civility those who are little accustomed to attention from their superiors, he disappoints the reasonable expectations of those who have received the homage of all around them until it has become a part of their just expectations and claims.

"This, at least, was the distinction here. The young men and the literary men all admired him; the old men and the politicians found their opinions and dignity too little regarded by the impetuous stranger. The reasons of this are to be sought, I think, in his education and constitution; and I was, therefore, not disposed to like him less for his defect. I was not disposed to claim for a man who must have passed his youth in severe and solitary study, and who was not brought into that class of society which refines and

fashions all the external expressions of character, until his mind and habits were matured, and he was brought there to be admired and to dictate. I was not disposed to claim from *him* that gentleness and delicacy of manners which are acquired only by early discipline, and which are most obvious in those who have received, perhaps, their very character and direction from early collision with their superiors in station or talent.

"Besides, even admitting that Mr. Jeffrey could have early been introduced to refined society, still I do not think his character would have been much changed; or, if it had been, that it would have been changed for the better. I do not think it would have been possible to have drilled him into the strict forms of society and *bienséance* without taking from him something we should be very sorry to lose.

"There seems to me to be a prodigious rapidity in his mind which could not be taken away without diminishing its force; and yet it is this rapidity, I think, which often offended some of my older friends, in the form of impatience and abruptness. He has, too, a promptness and decision which contribute, no doubt, to the general power of his mind, and certainly could not be repressed without taking away much of that zeal which carries him forward in his labors, and gives so lively an interest to his conversation; yet you could not be an hour in his presence without observing that his promptness and decision very often make him appear peremptory and assuming.

"In short, he has such a *familiar* acquaintance with almost all the subjects of human knowledge, and consequently such an intimate conviction that he is right, and such a habit of carrying his point; he passes, as it seems to me, with such intuitive rapidity from thought to thought, and subject to subject, that his mind is completely occupied and satisfied with its own knowledge and operations, and has no attention left to bestow on the tones and manner of expression. He is, in fact, so much absorbed with the weightier matters of

the discussion,—with the subject, the argument, and the illustrations,—that he forgets the small tithe of humanity and forbearance which he owes to every one with whom he converses; and I was not one of those who ever wished to correct his forgetfulness, or remind him of his debt."

This is all very graphic, but it is amazing to observe the lofty attitude of the young New Englander of twenty-three, for that was Ticknor's age when he thus delivered his judgment. One may indulge in a little merriment over his airy affectation of social superiority. When we realize what Jeffrey's social life had been, the patronizing tone, the assumption of dignity, conveyed by the lad's phrases, moves us to laughter. The solemn prigs of Massachusetts of 1814—so wise and great in their petty environment!—what was their dull, provincial society compared with that in which Jeffrey had been an ornament for years! Still, most of Ticknor's comments are worthy of notice; much may be forgiven to a confirmed Bostonian, who considers the Bostonian standard as the highest ever attained or ever dreamed of by mortal man.

Despite the air of tolerance which Mr. Ticknor displays with regard to Jeffrey in social life, it may not be amiss to recall that in a circle at least as worthy of esteem as that of Boston, he was received without question. He was always welcome in the refined precincts of Holland House, and indeed in all the Whig society of London, but as Mr. Sanders says in "The Holland House Circle," the appearances there of "the hard working Scotch lawyer and vigorous, if obscurantist writer, were comparatively rare except during the brief period when he sat in the Reform Parliament." In 1811 his London campaign included a large dinner

party at Holland House, where the hostess was "in great gentleness and softness," and where he failed to appreciate the charm of Lady Caroline Lamb. He seems not to have revisited Holland House until 1840, when he had "a sweet walk under the cedars and in the garden, where he listened in vain for the nightingales; though Lord Holland and Allen challenged them to answer by divers fat and asthmatical whistles." Jeffrey kept up his acquaintance with Lady Holland in her widowhood.\* That lady writes of him to Mrs. Creevey in 1814, "Do not be surprised at receiving a visit from that very dear little man, who has the best heart and temper, although the authors of the day consider him as their greatest scourge. \* \* \* You will think as much of his acquaintance, as he is full of wit, anecdote and lively sallies."†

## IV.

His devotion to his family was one of his most charming traits. In 1815 he took up his country residence at Craigcrook, three miles northwest of Edinburgh. Moore, visiting him there in 1825, says:

"Jeffrey cannot bear to stir without his wife and child; requires something living and breathing near him and is miserable when alone."

Craigcrook had been the home of Constable, and his son, Thomas Constable, quotes a letter from Jeffrey to his father, written August 25, 1814, to show "the unfailing consideration and the liberal kindness that were Mr. Jeffrey's eminent characteristics," offering, although he could not use the place for some con-

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\*The Holland House Circle. 257. London, 1908.

†Creevey Papers. I, 205.

siderable time, to pay for it at any time or to grant any moderate accommodation in money if any exigency in Constable's affairs required it. He also gives another letter to illustrate Jeffrey's liberality. By some carelessness, there had been delay in paying for an article in the *Review*. Jeffrey wrote to Constable:

"Here, by God's grace, is Mr. L.'s honorarium. Pray let it be sent off instantly to him, at Longman's & Co., and desire them to pay him or offer him ten guineas for the delay and disappointment. I *mulct* myself of this fine. \* \* \* I deserve this for my negligence, and besides it is right that the *Review* and its management should not be liable to the imputation of shabbiness, even from the shabby."

Two letters from Jeffrey to Hazlitt, written in 1818, are given by Constable, relating to a proposed suit at law which Hazlitt wished to begin against *Blackwood's Magazine*, which are too long for full quotation, but which show distinctly "the generous, yet wise and honest nature of the writer."\*

In one of these letters he says:

"I am concerned to find your health is not as good as it should be, and that you would take more care of it if your finances were in better order. We cannot let a man of genius suffer in this way, and I hope you are in no serious danger. I take the liberty of enclosing £100, a great part of which I shall owe you in a few weeks, and the rest you shall pay me back in reviews whenever you can do so without putting yourself to any uneasiness. If you really want another £100 tell me plainly and it shall be heartily at your service."

One morning he received a letter from Hazlitt, say-

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\*Archibald Constable and his Literary Correspondence (1873).



ing, "I am dying; can you send me £10 and so consummate your many kindnesses to me?" Jeffrey sent a check for £50, but whether it saved Hazlitt's life I am unable to discover.

The house in Moray Place, then the new part of Edinburgh, looked out on the Forth on one side and to a green garden on the other. Macaulay, no doubt intending to confer upon it the highest badge of distinction which an Englishman can bestow upon a dwelling-place, pronounced it to be "really equal to the houses in Grosvenor Square." Macaulay stopped with him there in 1828, and wrote to his mother:\*

"In one thing, as far as I have observed, he is always the same; and that is the warmth of his domestic affections. Neither Mr. Wilberforce nor my uncle Babington comes up to him in this respect. The flow of his kindness is quite inexhaustible. Not five minutes pass without some fond expression or caressing gesture to his wife or his daughter. He has fitted up a study for himself, but he never goes into it. Law papers, reviews, whatever he has to write, he writes in the drawing room or in his wife's boudoir. When he goes to other parts of the country on a retainer, he takes them in the carriage with him. I do not wonder that he should be a good husband; for his wife is a very amiable woman. But I was surprised to see a man so keen and sarcastic, so much of a scoffer, pouring himself out with such simplicity and tenderness in all sorts of affectionate nonsense."

On July 2, 1829, he was unanimously elected Dean of the Faculty of Advocates, a position of honor. His opinion was that the "head of a great law corporation" should not "continue to be the conductor of what might be fairly enough represented as in many respects a party

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\*Trevelyan's Macaulay. I. 143 (Am. Edn.).

journal." So he withdrew from the management of the *Edinburgh Review*. The number for June, 1829, was the last one edited by him, and thereafter he contributed to the magazine not more than five or six articles.

A few years later his friend Cockburn urged him in vain to undertake some work of original composition, but he could not be persuaded. In reply to Cockburn he wrote, on August 28, 1835:

"I have been delighting myself with Mackintosh. I only got the book two days ago and have done nothing but read it ever since. The richness of his mind intoxicates me. And yet do you not think he would have been a happier man, and quite as useful and respectable, if he had not fancied it a duty to write a great book? And is not this question an answer to your exhortation to me to write a little one? I have no sense of duty that way, and feel that the only sure or even probable result of the attempt would be hours and days of anxiety, and unwholesome toil, and a closing scene of mortification."

Of his two hundred contributions to the *Edinburgh*, seventy-nine were selected for publication in book form, in 1843; and a second edition, of three volumes, was issued five years later. These essays are not read now as are those of Macaulay, Hazlitt, Carlyle, or Mackintosh; because, while they have a certain charm and brightness, they possess no lasting qualities of style or of substance. They seem to be too fluent. As Dr. Samuel McChord Crothers said recently at Princeton—and he found it worth repeating in his interesting paper on the *Autocrat* in the *Atlantic Monthly* for August, 1909:

"The writer who is usually fluent should take

warning from the instructions which accompany his fountain pen: 'when this pen flows too freely it is a sign that it is nearly empty and should be filled'."

They seem to be wanting in depth and solidity. An American writer well says:

"He was French in his literary aptitudes and qualities; never heavy: touching things with a feather's point, yet touching them none the less surely."

But touching things with a feather's point, however surely, leaves but a slight impression and time effaces it without mercy. Yet it has also been said of him that he "with his clear, legal mind, his stabbing and brilliant manner of expression, his sarcasm, cold and sharp-edged as a Toledo blade, unfortunately only too capable of wounding too deeply—won the position of the greatest English critic of all time and of the most eminent Scottish lawyer of the day—achieving the highest honors open to the advocates of Edinburgh."\* It is the fate of men like him to be overestimated by their contemporaries and underrated by those who come after them.

He wrote for the *Edinburgh* a long review of Alison's *Essays on Taste*, which, in 1816, he used for the article on Beauty in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. This appeared later as a small volume.

His letters were always delightful; those to the American relatives of his wife, describing her new home life, are admirable. He wrote often to Mrs. Waddington—Georgiana Port, grand-niece of Mrs. Delany,—and in some of his letters to her he speaks quite frankly on literary matters. In 1812 he writes:

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\*Curwen. History of Booksellers. 117.

"As for Alison, its review, which you call abuse, is the best I ever wrote on a matter of free speculation, and Burke and Price are both wrong. This is one of the few things I am sure about, and I really have a strong desire to convert you to the right path. For Madame de Staël, I have never seen her *L'Allemagne* yet, and never asked for it. You see what a savage I am. Moreover, I do not greatly admire her, and I do not tolerate idolatry. *Corinne* is clever, and upon the strength of your recommendation I shall get the other immediately and review it candidly, if I find anything to say about it. \* \* \* There are some wild poems published here by a lad of the name of Wilson [*The Isle of Palms* was published early in 1812], a seraph of the Lake School, and very amiable. Lord Byron has also published a quarto of a strange sort of gloomy, misanthropical poetry\*—but powerful and vigorous. I have thoughts of reviewing both."

In 1814, answering Mrs. Waddington's request to review Madame D'Arblay's latest book—she was no longer the great Fanny Burney and had lost the art which made Johnson and Burke sit up all night to read *Evelina*—he writes:

"I don't know what to say to you about the *Wanderer*. The cry is pretty general against it, and among judicious and good people as well as others. There is no disguising the fact, and I am afraid there is only one way of accounting for it, not that the judges are—but that the work is bad. If a popular work—I mean a work intended to please and instruct general readers—is generally disliked, how can it be a good work? There is no way of getting over that. Yet you must know that I like the book better than anybody I meet with here—and better than anybody almost that I have heard of but you. I think it has

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\*The first two cantos of *Childe Harold*.

great faults, but I do not think it *very much* inferior to her earlier works, the faults of which seem to be forgotten in order to contrast their excellence with the faults of this, which is worse written than they are, and a little more diffuse, but has the same merits of brilliant coloring, decided character, and occasional elegance. Now I can't tell whether I shall review it or not, nor can I promise to speak of it as you do, if I should. Gently and favorably I certainly shall speak, because I have the highest veneration for the personal character of the author; but I must speak what I think. I do not think it quite pretty in her not to say a word in that long, foolish preface, of Miss Edgeworth, of Madame de Staël, and to praise herself so directly. The last may be partly simplicity of character; the first looks petty."

It was not until February, 1815, that the partly-promised review appeared, mainly a discussion of the general subject of "novels of manners." As to the book itself, he calls attention to the absurdities of the plot observing "that in the conduct of a story she never excelled, while her characters are equally superficial and confined." "We are sorry," he concludes, "to speak so disadvantageously of the work of so excellent and favorite a writer; and the more so as we perceive no decay of talent, but only a perversion of it."\* Most of us would think that he was too gentle in dealing with the stupid story, whose style Macaulay described as "a barbarous *patois*," a sort of "broken Johnsonese," and one marvels that it could have been written by the author of the *Diary*, which ranks with that of Pepys, among the best in the language.

The second volume of Cockburn's *Life* is made up entirely of letters. They are far more interesting than

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\*Side-Lights on the Georgian Period: George Paston, 48.

the *Life* itself, which is a stupid affair, containing long accounts of men who happened to be friends and acquaintances of Jeffrey and of the biographer, but who might have been dismissed with a mere reference. It is not divided into chapters and, worst of all, it has no index. Some original unpublished letters are in my possession. From the letter to his sister I have already quoted. Most of them are to John Richardson, an eminent Scottish solicitor, of whom Jeffrey was very fond. Unfortunately the chirography is so atrocious that it almost defies translation. Of his wretched scrawl Lady Holland says in her *Memoirs of Sydney Smith*:

“My father wrote to him, on receiving one of his letters, ‘My dear Jeffrey:—We are much obliged by your letter, but should be still more so were it legible. I have tried to read it from left to right, and Mrs. Sydney from right to left, and we neither of us can decipher a single word of it.’ ”

In one of these letters, dated November 10, 1818, he mentions the recent death of Romilly by suicide, and says:

“It is a tremendous revelation, this of Romilly’s death, and yet I cannot help considering it as rather an heroic ending.”

The rest is undecipherable—unless by some expert in Assyrian inscriptions. In another, written from Edinburgh on February 8, 1825, he reveals his kindly sentiments in regard to Thomas Campbell. He says:

“My dear Richardson:—Altho’ the new No. of the *Review* will be out within ten days, I am tempted to gratify Campbell’s natural impatience to know how we have treated him, by sending him a separate copy

of my article on his new volume,\* and not being sure of his address, I take the liberty of enclosing it to you. You may perhaps like to take a look of it in passing, and think this privilege a sufficient indemnification for the double postage to which it will subject you, if not, you must put it to my account. You will see I have treated him kindly—indeed I should not have the heart, I am afraid, to treat him otherwise, even if I thought he deserved it. But I really think, in substance, all I have said of him, tho' I might have expressed it less warmly and added other thoughts. Give my love to him and tell me how near I have come to pleasing him. You see I have done him the honor of placing him at the fore of the No. and consequently I have had this sheet by me for a fortnight. But I have forborne sending it for fear of its contents finding their way into some newspaper or magazine—against the possibility of which I beg you to caution the said Editorial pest, and to secure obedience to this caution I would recommend his burning the said sheet as soon as he has sufficiently perused it. \* \* \*

We are a little anxious about the Judicature Bill. When you hear any certain tidings of it, do let us know. What is the worshipful the Solr. doing up among you? What trim is Brougham in? What is to be done with Ireland? We have a strong paper on that subject in this No, which I am anxious to have out before decisive measures are adopted."

Another letter is to Talfourd, and it is an additional disclosure of his generous disposition:

EDINBURGH, 9 May, 1836.

My dear Serjeant—I wrote to Spring Rice the day after I received your new supplication for poor Leigh Hunt, and entreated him to confer favorably with you on the subject. Yesterday I had his answer, saying that he had nothing whatever to say as to selecting or

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\*Campbell's Theodoric, and Other Poems: No. 82, Article I.

suggesting who should have pensions, and that this was strictly and entirely in the department of Lord Melbourne, to whom, however, he promised to communicate what I had written. I have been making an application very nearly to the same effect with your friend, Dr. Bowring, with whom I suppose you are in communication, and whom I beg you will assure of my most hearty concurrence in so kind a suit. He seems to think Lord M. well disposed and if you get up a tolerable show of conservative auxiliaries, I shall have good hopes of success. I shall be most happy to hear of your progress, and to lend any little aid in my power. I have still a pleasing presentiment that I am to have the gratification of seeing you here in the course of the summer. In the meantime pray do not forget me.

Always very faithfully yours,

F. JEFFREY.

To Mr. Serjeant Talfourd, &c., &c.

Almost every one who refers to Macaulay's early life quotes what Jeffrey wrote to him in acknowledging the receipt of the manuscript of the essay on *Milton*, which appeared in the *Edinburgh* in August, 1825:

"The more I think the less I can conceive where you picked up that style."

It was a hasty remark, no doubt, and not meant to be embalmed for posterity; for Jeffrey surely knew that "style" is the result either of an inborn power of using language in a particular way or of care, study and wide reading; it is never "picked up."

It was easy for him to detect the signs of promise in a young contributor. He recognized Carlyle's merit at once, and the record of his relations with the Carlyles is an honorable one. He soon became their friend and benefactor, and for several years the articles in the



*Review* were one of the main sources of their income. It was difficult for Carlyle to be grateful to any one; but he came very near to gratitude towards Jeffrey. In the "Two Note Books," he says (1830), "Francis Jeffrey the other week offered me a hundred a year, having learned that this sum met my yearly wants; he did it neatly enough, and I had no doubt of his sincerity." In his "Reminiscences" he writes:

"Jeffrey about this time generously offered to confer on me an annuity of £100."

Charles Eliot Norton, in his footnote to this passage, refers to Carlyle's acute analysis of his own and Jeffrey's feelings in the matter, and adds that Carlyle hardly does justice to the simplicity of Jeffrey's kind intention. Carlyle refused to receive the gift, and perhaps he was right.

Froude gives us the story of the proposed annuity quite fully. He says:

"Jeffrey's anxiety to be of use did not end in recommendations to Napier. He knew how the Carlyles were situated in money matters. He knew that they were poor, and that their poverty had risen from a voluntary surrender of means which were properly their own, but which they would not touch while Mrs. Welsh was alive. He knew also that Carlyle had educated and was still supporting, his brother out of his own slender earnings. He saw, as he supposed, a man of real brilliancy and genius weighed down and prevented from doing justice to himself by a drudgery which deprived him of the use of his more commanding talents; and with a generosity the merit of which was only exceeded by the delicacy with which the offer was made, he proposed that Carlyle should accept a small annuity from him. Here again I regret that I am forbidden to print the admirable letter

in which Jeffrey conveyed his desire, to which Carlyle in his own mention of this transaction has done but scanty justice. The whole matter, he said, should be an entire secret between them. He would tell no one—not even his wife. He bade Carlyle remember that he, too, would have been richer if he had not been himself a giver where there was less demand upon his liberality. He ought not to wish for a monopoly of generosity, and if he was really a religious man he must do as he would be done to; nor, he added, would he have made the offer did he not feel that in similar circumstances he would have freely accepted it himself. To show his confidence he enclosed 50 *l.*, which he expected Carlyle to keep, and desired only to hear in reply that they had both done right.”

Later in the *Note Books* Carlyle records a visit of the Jeffreys and thus delivers himself:

Very good and interesting beyond wont was our worthy Dean. He is growing old, and seems dispirited and partly unhappy.” [Jeffrey was fifty-seven and could not have been remarkably aged.] “Jeffrey’s essential talent sometimes seems to me to have been that of a Goldoni; some comic Dramatist, not without a touch of true lyrical pathos. He is the best *mimic* (in the lowest and highest senses) I ever saw.  
\* \* \* He is one of the most *loving* men alive; has a true kindness, not of blood and habit only, but of soul and spirit. He cannot *do* without being loved.  
\* \* \* I have heard him say: ‘If Folly were the happiest, I would be a fool.’ Yet his daily Life belies this doctrine, and says: ‘Tho’ Goodness were the most wretched, I would be Good.’ In conversation he is brilliant (or rather sparkling) lively, kind, willing either to speak or listen, and above all men I have ever seen, ready and copious. On the whole, exceedingly pleasant in light talk. Yet alas light, light, too light! He will talk of nothing *earnestly*, tho’ his look sometimes betrays an earnest feeling. \* \* \*

He is not a *strong* man in any shape; but *nimble* and *tough*. He stands midway between God and Mammon; and his preaching thro' life has been an attempt to reconcile these. Hence his popularity; a thing easily accountable when one looks at the world and at him; but little honourable to either. Literature! Poetry! except by active indestructible Instinct, which he has never dared to avow, yet being a true Poet (in his way could never eradicate)—he knows not what they mean. A true Newspaper Critic, on the great scale; no priest, but a Concionator! Yet on the whole he is about the *best man* I ever saw. Sometimes I think he will abjure the Devil (if he live) and become a pure Light. Already he is a most tricky dainty beautiful little spirit; I have seen gleams on the face and eyes of the man that let you look into a higher country. God bless him!"

And this is the tribute paid by one who never did to anybody an act of disinterested kindness, an alleged philosopher who was always finding fault but was of no practical value to the world, to a man who was always doing good, a kindly, helpful man, whose life was love and who neither attained nor wished to attain that eminence as "a pure light" which manifests itself by the perpetual scolding of others.

Jane Welsh Carlyle partially atones for the dubious praise accorded by her surly spouse. "Lord Jeffrey" she writes "came unexpectedly while the Count [D'Orsay] was here. What a difference! The prince of critics, and the prince of dandies. How washed out the beautiful dandiacal face looked beside that little clever old man's. The large blue dandiacal eyes, you would have said, had never contemplated anything more than the reflection of the handsome personage they pertained to, in a looking glass; while the dark, penetrating eyes of the other had been taking note of most

things in God's universe, even seeing a good way into mill stones."\* Another worthy female—Harriet Martineau, who sneered at almost every one—thought Jeffrey "one of the most egregious flatterers of vain women in general." He had evidently flattered the lady atrociously. In her *Autobiography*, she expands her view, saying:

"Whatever there might be of artificial in Jeffrey's manners—of a set 'company state of mind' and mode of conversation,—there was a warm heart underneath, and an ingenuousness which added captivation to his intellectual graces. He could be absurd enough in his devotion to a clever woman; and he could be highly culpable in drawing out the vanity of a vain one, and then comically making game of it; but his better nature was always within call; and his generosity was unimpeachable in every other respect."

With regard to Jeffrey's behavior towards women, Carlyle in his *Reminiscences*, has some pleasant things to say:

"He had much the habit of flirting about with women, especially pretty women, much more the both pretty and clever; all in a weakish, mostly dramatic, and wholly theoretic way (his age now fifty gone); would daintily kiss their hands in bidding good morning, offer his due *homage*, as he phrased it; trip about, half like a lap-dog, half like a human adorer, with speeches pretty and witty, always of trifling import. I have known some women (not the prettiest) take offence at it, and awkwardly draw themselves up, but without the least putting him out. The most took it quietly, and found an entertainment to themselves in cleverly answering it, as he did in partly offering it; pertly, yet, with something of real reverence, and al-

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\*Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle. (1883.)

ways in a dexterous, light way, \* \* \* An airy environment of this kind was, whenever possible, a coveted charm in Jeffrey's way of life."

Carlyle in his *Reminiscences* has left these records of his impressions of the man who so befriended him in the hour of need:

"I used to find in him a finer talent than any he has evidenced in writing. This was chiefly when he got to speak Scotch, and gave me anecdotes of old Scotch Braxfield and vernacular (often enough but not always cynical) curiosities of that type, which he did with a greatness of gusto quite peculiar to the topic, with a fine and deep sense of humor, of real comic mirth, much beyond what was noticeable in him otherwise, not to speak of the perfection of the mimicry, which itself was something. I used to think to myself, 'Here is a man whom they have kneaded into the shape of an Edinburgh reviewer, and clothed the soul of in Whig formulas and blue and yellow; but he might have been a beautiful Goldoni too, or something better in that kind, and have given us *comedies* and aërial pictures true and poetic of human life in a far other way.' There was something of Voltaire in him, something even in bodily features; those bright-beaming, swift and piercing hazel eyes, with their accompaniment of rapid, keen expression in the other lineaments of face, resembled one's notion of Voltaire; and in the voice, too, there was a fine half-plangent kind of metallic ringing tone which used to remind me of what I fancied Voltaire's voice might have been; 'voix sombre et majestueuse,' Duvernet calls it."

## V.

They must have been greatly addicted to talk for talk's sake in those days. There appears to have been far more interchange of words among the men of let-

ters than there has been among the writers of recent generations. We read so much in all their interminable memoirs and in their voluminous correspondence, about "talk," and the merits of the talkers—talk at clubs, at dinners, in the salons,—talk morning, noon and night—that it is puzzling to find out how they ever found time to work. It must be owned that we are not favored with many records of what was actually said, the few volumes of "Table Talk" being manifestly edited for publication so as to take all the spontaneity out of them; and the "jests" and "anecdotes" which have been preserved to us seem mostly flat, stale and unprofitable, although there are a few deserving immortality, such as the one about Jeffrey's damning the North Pole and the resulting accusation by Sydney Smith of using disrespectful language about the equator. An example of the dreariness of some of these talks is afforded by the discussion between Moore, Rogers and Lord Holland and later between Moore and John Wilson about the wonderful joke of Sheridan delivered to Tarleton, and Lord John Russell's ludicrous note thereon in his edition of Moore's Memoirs. Moore expresses rather a gloomy opinion of this joke or *bon mot*. Lord Russell appends this portentous remark:

"Sheridan's joke to Tarleton. Any one might think the wit poor (although I do not agree with them) but the joke is clear enough. 'I was on a horse, and now I'm on an elephant,' *i. e.*, 'I was high above others, but now I am much higher.' 'You were on an ass, and now you're on a mule,' said Sheridan: *i. e.*, 'You *were* stupid and now you're obstinate.' For quick repartee in conversation, there are few things better. J. R."

There are luckily no such scintillations of wit charged against Jeffrey, but the tradition concerning him gives him the highest reputation as an entertaining talker. He was not addicted to the telling of anecdotes or "stories," but was "bubbling over with engaging book-lore and poetic hypotheses, and eager to put them into those beautiful shapes of language which come—as easily as water flows—to his pen or to his tongue. \* \* \* One did not, after conversing with him, recall great special aptness of remark or of epithet, so much as the charmingly even flow of apposite and illustrative language—void of all extravagances and of all wickedness too."\* His biographer says of his conversation:

"The listener's pleasure was enhanced by the personal littleness of the speaker. A larger man could scarcely have thrown off Jeffrey's conversational flowers without exposing himself to ridicule. But the liveliness of the deep thoughts, and the flow of the bright expressions that animated his talk, seemed so natural and appropriate to the figure that uttered them, that they were heard with something of the delight with which the slenderness of the trembling throat and the quivering of the wings make us enjoy the strength and clearness of the notes of a little bird."†

This description produces rather a belittling effect, reminding one of a canary bird in a cage, and it may be doubted if the subject of it would have relished it greatly.

Haydon, writing to Miss Mitford from Edinburgh in 1820, is not as enthusiastic as some others, and remarks that

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\*Donald G. Mitchell, *English Letters and Kings*, 93.

†Lord Cockburn: *Life*, I, 364.

"Jeffrey has a singular expression, poignant, bitter, piercing—as if his countenance never lighted up but at the perception of some weakness in human nature. Whatever your praise to Jeffrey, he directly chuckles out some error that you did not perceive. Whatever your praise to Scott, he joins heartily with yourself, and directs your attention to some additional beauty. The face of Scott is the expression of a man whose great pleasure has been to shake Nature by the hand; while to point at her with his finger, has certainly, from his expression, been the chief enjoyment of Jeffrey."\*

Richard Harris Barham records that Moore spoke of Jeffrey as an excellent judge, and remarked on the difference between his conversation and that of Scott; Scott was all anecdote, without any intermediate matter, all fact, while Jeffrey had a profusion of ideas all worked up into the highest flight of fancy, but no fact. Moore preferred Scott's talk, as he got tired of Jeffrey's.

One reason why different people had opposing opinions in regard to Jeffrey's personality and conversation, is given by Macaulay in the letter to his mother from which a quotation has already been given,—a letter written with the power and vividness of expression which marked not only his published work but even his private correspondence. He said:

"I will commence with Jeffrey. I had almost forgotten his person; and, indeed, I should not wonder if even now I were to forget it again. He has twenty faces, almost as much unlike each other as my father's to Mr. Wilberforce's, and infinitely more unlike to each other than those of near relations often

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\*B. R. Haydon and His Friends. III.



are, infinitely more unlike, for example, than those of the two Grants. When absolutely quiescent, reading a paper, or hearing a conversation in which he takes no interest, his countenance shows no indication whatever of intellectual superiority of any kind. But as soon as he is interested, and opens his eyes upon you, the change is like magic. There is a flash in his glance, a violent contortion in his frown, an exquisite humor in his sneer, and a sweetness and brilliancy in his smile, beyond anything that I ever witnessed. A person who had seen him in only one state would not know him if he saw him in another. For he has not, like Brougham, marked features which in all moods of mind remain unaltered. The mere outline of his face is insignificant. The expression is everything, and such power and variety of expression I never saw in any human countenance, not even in that of the most celebrated actors. I can conceive that Garrick may have been like him. I have seen several pictures of Garrick, none resembling another, and I have heard Hannah More speak of the extraordinary variety of countenance by which he was distinguished, and of the unequalled radiance and penetration of his eye. The voice and delivery of Jeffrey resemble his face. He possesses considerable power of mimicry, and rarely tells a story without imitating several different accents. His familiar tone, his declamatory tone, and his pathetic tone are quite different things. Sometimes Scotch predominates in his pronunciation; sometimes it is imperceptible. Sometimes his utterance is snappish and quick to the last degree; sometimes it is remarkable for rotundity and mellowness. I can easily conceive that two people who had seen him on different days might dispute about him as the travelers in the fable disputed about the chameleon."

Mrs. Grant of Laggan, usually styled "the celebrated," writes of a visit she received from Scott and Jeffrey:

"You would think that the body of each was formed to lodge the soul of the other. Jeffrey looks the poet all over: the ardent eye, the nervous agitation, the visibly quick perceptions keep one's attention awake in the expectation of flashes of genius; nor is that expectation disappointed, for his conversation is in a high degree fluent and animated. Walter Scott has not a gleam of poetic fire in his countenance, which merely suggests the idea of plain good sense."

She confessed that she was unable to refrain from liking "the archcritic" in spite of his manifold literary offenses.

Macaulay thought his conversation very much like his countenance and his voice, of immense variety, sometimes plain and unpretending, sometimes brilliant and rhetorical; a shrewd observer, fastidious, and while not altogether free from affectation himself, having a peculiar loathing for it in other people.

"He has a particular contempt" Macaulay adds "in which I most heartily concur with him, for the *fadaises* of blue-stocking literature, for the mutual flatteries of coteries, the handing about of *vers de société*, the albums, the conversaziones, and all the other nauseous trickeries of the Sewards, Hayleys, and Sothebys. I am not quite sure that he has escaped the opposite extreme, and that he is not a little too desirous to appear rather a man of the world, an active lawyer, or an easy, careless gentleman, than a distinguished writer."

Macaulay thought him to be hypochondriac, but that he was "on the whole, the youngest looking man of fifty that I know, at least when he was animated." In 1828 when this was written, Jeffrey was fifty-five.

Of his conversation, Hazlitt says in his *Spirit of the Age*:

"There is no subject on which he is not *au fait*: no company in which he is not ready to scatter his pearls for sport. \* \* \* His only difficulty seems to be, not to speak, but to be silent. \* \* \* He is never absurd, nor has he any favorite points which he is always bringing forward. It cannot be denied that there is something bordering on petulance of manner, but it is of that least offensive kind which may be accounted for from merit and from success, and implies no exclusive pretensions nor the least particle of ill-will to others. On the contrary, Mr. Jeffrey is profuse of his encomiums and admiration of others, but still with a certain reservation of a right to differ or to blame. He cannot rest on one side of a question; he is obliged by a mercurial habit and disposition, to vary his point of view. If he is ever tedious, it is from an excess of liveliness; he oppresses from a sense of airy lightness. He is always setting out on a fresh scent; there are always *relays* of topics. \* \* \* New causes are called; he holds a brief in his hand for every possible question. This is a fault. Mr. Jeffrey is not obtrusive, is not impatient of opposition, is not unwilling to be interrupted; but what is said by another seems to make no impression on him; he is bound to dispute, to answer it, as if he was in Court, or as if he were in a paltry Debating Society, where young beginners were trying their hands. \* \* \* He cannot help cross-examining a witness, or stating the adverse view of the question. He listens not to judge, but to reply. In consequence of this, you can as little tell the impression your observations make on him as what weight to assign to his."

Most of us have met men who are like Jeffrey in these respects; usually they are the bright, clever, self-centered men, who consider themselves to be on exhibition. In talking with them, one can see at a glance that they are thinking not of what you are saying to them but of what they will say when you have paused.

They are entertaining persons, but not always agreeable in conversation.

Hazlitt further says:

“Mr. Jeffrey shines in mixed company; he is not good in a *tête-à-tête*. You can only show your wisdom and your wit in general society; but in private your follies or your weaknesses are not the least interesting topics; and our critic has neither any of his own to confess, nor does he take delight in hearing those of others. Indeed, in Scotland generally the display of personal character, the indulging your whims and humors in the presence of a friend is not much encouraged—every one there is looked upon in the light of a machine, of a collection of topics. \* \* \* The accomplished and ingenious person of whom we speak, has been a little infected by the tone of his countrymen—he is too didactic, too pugnacious, too full of electrical shocks, too much like a voltaic battery, and reposes too little on his own excellent good sense, his own love of ease, his cordial frankness of temper and unaffected candor. He ought to have belonged to us!”

Lockhart is not quite as censorious as Hazlitt is, but then Lockhart had a more amiable disposition. He says, in “Peter’s Letters to his Kinsfolk”:

“I have never, I believe, heard so many ideas thrown out by any man in so short a space of time, and apparently with such entire negation of exertion. His conversation acted upon me like the first delightful hour after taking opium. The thoughts he scattered so readily about him (his words, rapid and wonderfully rapid as they are, appearing to be continually panting after his conceptions)—his thoughts, I say, were at once so striking, and so just, that they took in succession entire possession of my imagination, and yet with so felicitous a *tact* did he forbear from ex-

pressing any one of these too freely, that the reason was always kept in a pleasing kind of excitement, by the endeavor more thoroughly to examine their bearings. \* \* \* I have heard some men display more profoundness of reflection, and others of a much greater command of the conversational picturesque—but I never before witnessed anything to be compared with the blending together of apparently little consistent powers in the whole strain of his discourse. Such a power, in the first place, of throwing away at once every useless part of the idea to be discussed, and then such a happy redundancy of imagination to present the essential and reserved part in its every possible relation, and point of view,—and all this connected with so much of the plain *savoir faire* of actual existence, and such a thorough scorn of mystification, it is really a very wonderful intellectual coalition.”

In the *Reminiscences*, Carlyle describes a scene in his own home at Craigenputtoch.

“One of the nights there \* \* \* encouraged possibly by the presence of poor James Anderson, an ingenious, simple, youngish man, and our nearest gentleman neighbor, Jeffrey in the drawing room was cleverer, brighter, and more amusing than I ever saw him elsewhere. We had got to talk of public speaking, of which Jeffrey had plenty to say, and found Anderson and all of us ready enough to hear. Before long he fell into mimicking of public speakers, men unknown, perhaps imaginary generic specimens; and did it with such a felicity, flowing readiness, ingenuity, and perfection of imitation as I never saw equalled, and had not given him credit for before. Our cozy little drawing room, bright-shining, hidden in the lowly wilderness, how beautiful it looked to us, become suddenly as it were a Temple of the Muses! The little man strutted about full of electric fire, with attitudes, with gesticulations, still more with winged words, often broken-winged, amid our admiring laugh-

ter; gave us the windy, grandiloquent specimen, the ponderous stupid, the airy ditto, various specimens, as the talk, chiefly his own, spontaneously suggested, of which there was a little preparatory interstice between each two. And the mimicry was so complete, you would have said not his mind only, but his very body became the specimens, his face filled with the expression represented, and his little figure seeming to grow gigantic if the personage required it. At length he gave us the abstruse costive specimen, which had a meaning and no utterance for it, but went about clambering, stumbling, as on a path of loose bowlders, and ended in total down-break, amid peals of the heartiest laughter from us all. This of the aërial little sprite standing there in fatal collapse, with the brightest of eyes sternly gazing into utter nothingness and dumbness, was one of the most tickling and genially ludicrous things I ever saw, and it prettily winded up our little drama."

## VI.

Robert Pearse Gillies, that odd, unlucky, obscure aspirant for honor as a poet and an editor, has left in his book of recollections an account of Jeffrey which exaggerates certain traits and must have been written as of a time when the "little great man," as Hazlitt calls him, was still young and perhaps a bachelor. He says:

"Among the public characters who were always to be met with at our balls and routs in those days, out of sight and comparison the most distinguished was Mr. Jeffrey. To every one who appreciated his talents, the wonder was how he could reconcile his mode of life in this respect with his literary and professional engagement. But that he did so was very certain. He seemed the gayest of the gay. He was invited

everywhere, tried to make his appearance everywhere, and on all such occasions his popularity (if possible) increased. \* \* \* To all appearances he cared not a rush about habits of consecutive application. No one could guess what portion of *his* day was appropriated to literary tasks nor indeed could have imagined that he really had any such tasks on hand. In the mornings, from nine till two, he was on parade and professionally employed in the Parliament House. Thereafter, till dinner time, weather permitting, he walked out or promenaded on horseback. Never did it happen for a single day during the season, that he had not divers invitations both for dinner and evening parties. Of the former, it is needless to say, he could accept only one *per diem*; but it was quite possible during the evening, to migrate from one rout to another, and this he often did, winding up, of course, where the supper party was most attractive and congenial."

Referring to Dugald Stewart and Sir Walter Scott, their quiet homes and orderly libraries, he continues:

"Never did any fox-hunter or wild roué trample more disdainfully on all such notions than Mr. Jeffrey! He had third-rate apartments in a 'land' situated in Queen Street, where exclusive of the necessary law books and the very newest publications, his entire library consisted of a few motley tatterdemalion volumes, for all the world likeliest to a set of worn out school books, and such perhaps they really were. Truly there appeared no great charm in that home to render it an object of attachment and affection. Its arrangements were not symmetrical nor indicated much attention to comfort. The looking-glass over the chimney piece remains yet in my remembrance, because within and under its tarnished frame were located a preposterous multitude of visiting cards and notes of invitation which showered on him from all quarters, 'thick as the leaves in Vallambrosa'."

Jeffrey did not occupy a "third-rate apartment in Queen Street" after his marriage, and it is quite absurd to found a judgment upon a man's whole life, on a mode of living as a young bachelor. But even Gillies,—a little envious—cannot withhold a slight tribute of praise. He goes on to say:

"From all this and other traits which I might adduce, who could have imagined that the gay, young barrister was in truth the most adventurous and successful student in town, the very man of all our Athenian world who was most ready and able to grapple with a difficult question, to torture and twist it by the process of analysis and reasoning, till gleams of light the most unexpected were thrown upon the subject, and who when his reader or hearer thought that no more could possibly be done, would start again *de novo*, not merely with unabated but increased vivacity, adding more and more of patient argument and brilliant illustration, till at last a so-called essay (alias review) came forth, comprising materials that might serve as texts for future volumes.

"This was not comprehensible yet was nevertheless true—*when* did he elaborate his papers? There was only one way of accounting for it—the old suggestion as applied in the case of Chatterton, that he did not sleep, but could betake himself to work with undiminished zeal when the day's work of the world was done. It would be rather too hypothetical to suppose that he possessed a duality of mind, and could persist in arranging silently a critical argument with one, whilst with the other he managed a nonsensical conversation at the supper table. However, there was one leading peculiarity in Jeffrey's character, which perhaps rendered time of some value in his case, that would otherwise have been lost; I mean the grace and alacrity wherewith, if opportunity offered, he could turn ordinary conversation to account. If the most commonplace remark was tendered on a subject in



itself interesting, he would rapidly reply with an illustration as original as it was unexpected. And if his superficial neighbor luckily ventured to differ from him in opinion, then he would rouse and present the matter in a hundred new lights (if needful) so as to carry his point. And this argument taking its rise, perhaps, from a mere platitude in the course of ordinary table-talk, or during a walk to Corstorphin Hill, might dwell on his remembrance and if committed afterwards to writing, serve for the commencement of a leading article."

These diffuse and somewhat rambling remarks of Gillies have been given so fully because they afford a portrait of the real Jeffrey as he appeared to his contemporaries in his younger days, and throw much light on his methods as they were before he attained celebrity outside of the narrow walls of the Scotch "Athens." These methods were never wholly abandoned, and the result has been that what he wrote often conveys an impression that he has not penetrated to the core of his subject, but is playing around and about it with no settled convictions and no wish to have any such convictions concerning it. Naturally writings of this kind have no permanence of interest, and soon become part of the lumber of the past, read only by some curious burrower in literary history. But the man, Jeffrey, will be read of and remembered although his once-dreaded reviews may have gone the way of most of the ephemeral pages of the magazine.

Hazlitt certainly knew him well, and had abundant occasion to experience the benefit of his generous friendship. In the *Spirit of the Age*, Hazlitt further says of him :

"The severest of critics, as he has been sometimes termed, is the best natured of men. Whatever there

may be of wavering or indecision in Mr. Jeffrey's reasoning, or of harshness in his critical decisions, in his disposition there is nothing but simplicity and kindness. He is a person that no one knows without esteeming, and who both in his public connections and private friendships, shows the same manly uprightness and unbiassed independence of spirit. At a distance, in his writings, or even in his manner, there may be something to excite a little uneasiness and apprehension; in his conduct, there is nothing to except against. He is a person of strict integrity himself, without pretence or affectation; and knows how to respect this quality in others, without prudery or intolerance. He can censure a friend or a stranger, and serve him effectually at the same time. He expresses his disapprobation, but not as an excuse for closing up the avenues of his liberality. He is a Scotchman without one particle of hypocrisy, of cant, of servility, or selfishness in his composition. He has not been spoiled by fortune—has not been tempted by power—is firm without violence, friendly without weakness—a critic and even-tempered, a casuist and an honest man—and amidst the toils of his profession and the distractions of the world, retains the gayety, the unpretending carelessness, and simplicity of youth."

In Macvey Napier's *Correspondence* (London, 1879) he quotes Macaulay as saying, in 1843:

"When I compare him with Sydney and myself, I feel, with humility perfectly sincere, that his range is immeasurably wider than ours. And this is only as a writer. But he is not only a writer; he has been a great advocate, and he is a great judge. Take him all in all, I think him more nearly an universal genius than any man of our time. \* \* \* Jeffrey has tried nothing in which he has not succeeded, except Parliamentary speaking; and there he obtained what to any other man would have been great success, and

disappointed his hearers only because their expectations were extravagant."

Doctor John Brown, in *Horae Subsecivae*, speaks of

"Jeffrey, whom flattery, success, and himself cannot spoil, or taint that sweet, generous nature—keen, instant, unsparing, and true as a rapier; the most painstaking and honest working of all clever men."

## VII

We have observed that in his earlier years at the bar he had but little practice. His lack of early success has been ascribed partly to his Whig opinions; but they could not have done him any serious harm. It has also been said to be due to the general prejudice against literary lawyers. This prejudice may have had something to do with it; for clients are inclined to believe that their lawyer should not think of anything but their affairs and their cases and resent devotion to any shrines but their own. The law is proverbially a jealous mistress, but clients are even more jealous masters. When a man has won a reputation as a lawyer he may perhaps by way of digression, a holiday excursion, dabble in literature; but not till then. If he makes a business of literary work, he must give up hope of eminence in the field of jurisprudence. After he has gained a name in his profession, his dabblings are never regarded seriously. Still, Jeffrey began to rise as a lawyer after he became known as an editor and a reviewer. He was at his best before juries, as may well be supposed,

for jurymen care very little about profundities and a good deal about things that shine brightly on the surface.

The *Monthly Magazine* said of him, as a lawyer:

“When once he had made himself master of a case and its bearings, he was always ready to debate it, even at a moment’s warning, however heterogeneous the subject to which he had been tasking his faculties the moment before. This might be owing to a habit which he had in previous conversations with the party or his agent, to ply them with all the arguments that could be brought against them. Often have we known an honest countryman, perplexed by his objections, remonstrate with his attorney for having encouraged him to proceed with a hopeless case, or for having employed a pleader of so desponding a temperament; and immediately thereafter have we seen his honest face grow momentarily broader and broader, brighter and brighter, as Jeffrey, on stepping to the bar, proceeded to demonstrate his right in a train of the closest and most irrefragable reasoning.”

One is amused and not displeased at the fact that, as he found trouble in adjusting his forensic wig over his black, bushy hair, he never wore a wig in court and was for many years the only lawyer at the Scottish bar who dared to dispense with that ornament. Despite this defiance of professional custom, he became a leader in the courts. He did excellent work in the trial of Maclaren and Bird for sedition in 1817, and again in sedition cases at Stirling in 1820, although he lost his causes. In 1821 he was made Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow. When the Whigs came into power in 1830 he was made Lord Advocate. Carlyle writes in his *Note Book* about that time:

"Jeffrey is Lord Advocate and M. P. Sobbed and shrieked at taking office, like a bride going to be married."

He may have shown some emotion but his cross-grained friend, who was given to thinking and writing in italics and with over-abundant exclamation points, probably exaggerated it. Jeffrey resigned his deanship and he set to work to get the necessary seat in Parliament. Cockburn notes that the income of his new office was about £3000 a year, but between December, 1830 and May, 1832, he spent about £10,000 in parliamentary contests. Elected for the Forfarshire burghs, he lost his seat through some defect in the proceedings, and was then chosen, April 6, 1831, for Malton. He failed of election for Edinburgh and was in June again elected for Malton. After the Reform Bill was passed he stood again for Edinburgh, and was elected December 19, 1832. He did not achieve much success in Parliament, for he began too late. He was never an orator, although in what he said he was "always clean-cut, sensible, picturesque, flowing smoothly, but rather on the surface of things than into their depths." Mackintosh\* spoke favorably of the speech on reform which he delivered on March 4, 1831, and it was published "at the special request of government." He made other speeches which were well regarded, but they were rather essays than speeches.

Brougham in his *Memoirs* says, however:

"It was the custom to say he had failed in Parliament. I recollect meeting Sir Robert Peel the night he made his first speech; and in answer to my inquiry

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\**Memoirs*, II: 479.

as to its success, he said that Jeffrey had fired over their heads, and was too clever for his audience."

If one may judge of the House of Commons of that day by the House of the present, it could not have been difficult to accomplish that feat.

He was hampered by a distressing infirmity, suffering greatly from an affection of the trachea, and was obliged to undergo an operation in October, 1831. He grew weary of his tasks, and while he preserved his good temper and conciliatory ways, he found much of the work quite distasteful.

Hazlitt in his *Spirit of the Age* gives a description of Jeffrey's style of speaking. He says:

"He makes fewer *blots* in addressing an audience than any one we remember to have heard. There is not a hairbreadth space between any two of his words, nor is there a single expression either ill-chosen or out of place. He speaks without stopping to take breath, with ease, with point, with elegance, and without 'spinning the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument.' He may be said to weave words into any shapes he pleases for use or ornament, as the glass-blower moulds the vitreous fluid with his breath, and his sentences shine like glass from their polished smoothness, and are equally transparent. \* \* \* Whenever the Scotch advocate has appeared at the bar of the English House of Lords, he has been admired by those who were in the habit of attending to speeches there, as having the greatest fluency of language and the greatest subtlety of distinction of any one of the profession. The law-reporters were as little able to follow him from the extreme rapidity of his utterance as from the tenuity and evanescent nature of his reasoning."

The article of the *New Monthly Magazine*, (1831), says:

"His delivery is not commanding—*that*, his figure forbids—but it is fascinating. He rises, settles his gown about his shoulders, and commences in a low tone of voice. For the first two or three sentences, he seems beating about for ideas—words there are plenty. But he soon comes upon the track. With the side of his face turned towards the person or persons he is addressing, he fixes his serpent eye upon them and holds them fast. At one time he leans forward and speaks in tones as harsh as the grating of an earthenware plate upon a working grindstone; again he stands erect, or even casts himself backward, and without any sensible motion of his lips, emits a continuous stream of most melodious voice."

Lockhart in *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, (1819), remarks of Jeffrey's oratory:

"I have told you in a former letter that his pronunciation is wretched—it is a mixture of provincial English, with undignified Scotch, altogether snappish and offensive, and which would be quite sufficient to render the elocution of a more ordinary man utterly disgusting; but the flow of his eloquence is so overpoweringly rapid, so unweariedly energetic, so entirely unlike every other man's mode of speaking, that the pronunciation of the particular words is quite lost to one's view, in the midst of that continual effort which is required, in order to make the understanding, even the ear of the listener, keep pace with the glowing velocity of the declamation. His words come more profusely than words ever came before, and yet it seems as if they were quite unable to follow, *passibus aequis*, the still more amazing speed of his thought. You sit, while minute follows minute uncounted and unheeded, in a state of painful excitation, as if you were in a room overlighted with gas, or close under the crash of a whole pealing orchestra.

"This astonishing fluency and vivacity, if possessed by a person of very inferior talents, might for a little

be sufficient to create an illusion in his favor; and I have heard that such things have been. But the more you can overcome the effect of Mr. Jeffrey's dazzling rapidity, and concentrate your attention on the ideas embodied with such supernatural facility, the greater will be your admiration. It is impossible to conceive the existence of a more fertile, teeming intellect. The flood of his illustration seems to be at all times rioting up to the very brim—yet he commands and restrains it with equal strength and skill; or, if it does boil over for a moment, it spreads such a richness all around, that it is impossible to find fault with its extravagance. \*

\* \* If he be not the most delightful, he is certainly by far the most wonderful of speakers."

James Grant, in *Random Recollections*, referring to Jeffrey's first speech in Parliament, 1831, says:

"The amazing rapidity of his delivery operated much against his speech. I think I never heard a person, either in or out of the House, speak so fast as he did on that occasion. The most experienced short-hand reporters were unable to follow him. \* \* \* Yet, notwithstanding the rapidity with which Mr. Jeffrey spoke on this occasion, he never so much as faltered once, nor recalled a word which he uttered to substitute one more suitable for it. His manner \* \* \* was graceful, but it wanted variety. His voice was clear and pleasant; but it had no flexibility in its intonations. He continued and ended in much the same tones as he began. The same monotony characterized his gesticulation."

## VIII

Glad to be relieved of parliamentary drudgery, he became a Lord of the Sessions in May, 1834, and after a farewell dinner had been given to him by the Scottish members, he assumed his judicial seat on



June 7, 1834, and thus acquired his title of "Lord Jeffrey," for he never reached the peerage. He usually passed his winters in Edinburgh, and his summers at Craigcrook, visiting London in the spring. In the summers he occupied himself in his garden and in reading. Sir Leslie Stephen says:

"He was a sloven in regard to books, and had a 'wretched collection,' though in a 'moment of infirmity' he joined the Bannatyne Club in 1826. He had been one of the founders of the 'Friday Club,' in 1803, which endured for more than thirty years."

As a judge he gave great satisfaction, showing the same qualities of tact, quickness and accuracy which marked his career at the bar and in the world of letters. In 1841 he had a serious illness, from the effects of which he never entirely recovered. In November, 1842, he became a member of the first division of the court, where he had three associates and where the opinions were oral. Cockburn asserts that he was singularly patient, painstaking and candid. His fault was over-volubility and mutability, which led him to interpose a 'running margin of questions, suppositions and comments' throughout the argument. But his urbanity and openness of mind made him exceedingly popular, especially with the bar.\* Some men are so constituted mentally that they are unable to comprehend an argument except by interrupting the counsel and satisfying themselves as the hearing proceeds, in regard to the questions which occur to them at the moment. Such judges annoy and disconcert lawyers, because they disturb the orderly sequence of the argument and their fidgety

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\*Dictionary of National Biography, xxix, 275.

queries bring about a sort of medley, without form or shape, instead of a well-arranged presentation of the subject under consideration. In this way time is often wasted and real injustice done. All sound lawyers welcome questions by the court arising naturally out of the particular matter with which they may happen to be dealing, but it is otherwise when a nimble minded, restless judge insists upon darting from the point immediately under consideration to some remote field, which is to be entered upon later. The judge who talks too much is as unsatisfactory as the one who never opens his lips and listens with blank stolidity. Jeffrey's personal charm, however, endeared him to all who practised before him.

Many of his contemporaries dwell upon his personality, his appearance, and his manners. The author of the paper in the *New Monthly Magazine* (1831), to which reference has been made, thus describes him:

"He is of low stature, but his figure is elegant and well proportioned. This he seems to be aware of from the assiduity with which he takes care that his little personage shall always be set out to the best advantage. The continually varying expression of his countenance renders it impossible to say what his features are. \*

\* \* The face is rather elongated, the chin deficient, the mouth well-formed, with a mingled expression of determination, sentiment and arch-mockery; the nose is slightly curved. \* \* \* The brow never presents the same appearance for two moments successively; it is now smooth and unfurrowed, lofty and vaulted; look again, and the skin is contracted upwards into a thousand parallel wrinkles, offering the semblance of a 'forehead villainous low.' The eye is

the most peculiar feature of the countenance; it is large and sparkling, but with a want of transparency that gives it the appearance of a heartless enigma."

Lockhart says of him, in *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*:

"It is a face which any man would pass without observation in a crowd, because it is small and swarthy, and entirely devoid of lofty or commanding outlines—and besides, his stature is so low, that he might walk close under your chin or mine without ever catching the eye even for a moment.

"Mr. Jeffrey \* \* \* is a very active-looking man, with an appearance of extraordinary vivacity in all his motions and gestures. His face is one which cannot be understood at a single look—perhaps it requires, as it certainly invites, a long and anxious scrutiny before it lays itself open to the gazer. The features are neither handsome, nor even very defined in their outlines; and yet the effect of the whole is as striking as any arrangement either of more noble or more marked features, which ever came under my view. The forehead is very singularly shaped, describing in its bend from side to side a larger segment of a circle than is at all common; compressed below the temples almost as much as Sterne's; and throwing out sinuses above the eyes, of an extremely bold and compact structure. The hair is very black and wiry, standing in ragged, bristly clumps out from the upper part of his head, but lying close and firm lower down, especially about the ears. Altogether, it is picturesque, and adds to the effect of the visage. The mouth is the most expressive part of his face. The lips are very fine, but they tremble and vibrate, even when brought close together, in such a way as to give the idea of an intense, never-ceasing play of mind. There is a delicate kind of sneer almost always upon them, which has not the least appearance of ill-temper about it, but seems to belong entirely to the speculative understanding of the man.

"I have said that the mouth is the most expressive part of his face—and, in one sense, this is the truth, for it is certainly the seat of all its rapid and transitory expression. But what speaking things are his eyes! They disdain to be agitated by those lesser emotions which pass over the lips; they reserve their fierce and dark energies for matters of more moment; once kindled with the heat of any passion, how they beam, flash upon flash! The scintillation of a star is not more fervid. Perhaps, notwithstanding this, their repose is even more worthy of attention. With the capacity of emitting such a flood of radiance, they seem to take a pleasure in banishing every ray from their black, inscrutable, glazed, tarn-like circles. I think their prevailing language is, after all, rather a melancholy than a merry one—it is, at least, very full of reflection. Such is a faint outline of this countenance, the features of which (to say nothing at all of their expression), have, as yet, baffled every attempt of the portrait painters.

\* \* \* A sharp, and at the same time, very deep-toned voice—a very bad pronunciation, but accompanied with very little of the Scotch accent—a light and careless manner exchanged now and then for an infinite variety of more earnest expression and address—this is as much as I could carry away from my first visit."

Dr. John Brown in his *Horae Subsecivae* (Third Series, Edinburgh, 1882) said of Jeffrey's mouth that it was "mobile and yet firm, arch, and kind, with a beautiful procacity or petulance about it, that you would not like absent in him, or present in any one else."

Robert Tomes in *My College Days* writes of him:

"I often peeped through the green curtain which hung before his contracted judicial shell, and watched the wondrous little man unravelling, in his quick, impatient way, the tangle of Scotch law. His restless person was in a state of perpetual movement; his eyes turning here, there, and everywhere; his features at constant play; his forehead rippling in quick succes-

sive wrinkles as if trying to throw off his close-fitting judicial wig, which seemed to grasp his diminutive head painfully, almost down to his eyebrows, and with its great stiff curls of white horse-hair heavily to oppress him with its weight. His arms, too, he was ever moving with an uneasy action, as if he would rid himself of the incumbrance of his official robe of scarlet, which covered his shoulders, and hung in loose folds from his neck to his wrists."

Carlyle in his *Reminiscences* gives a vivid pen-picture of him, as he was apt to do when he dealt with those who interested him:

"A delicate, attractive, dainty little figure as he merely walked about, much more if he were speaking, uncommonly bright black eyes, instinct with vivacity, intelligence, and kindly fire; round brow, delicate oval face full of rapid expression, figure light, nimble, pretty though so small, perhaps hardly five feet in height. He had his gown, almost never any wig, wore his black hair rather closely cropt; I have seen the back part of it jerk suddenly out in some of the rapid expressions of his face, and knew even if behind him that his brow was then puckered, and his eyes looking archly, half contemptuously out, in conformity to some conclusive little cut his tongue was giving."

Elsewhere Carlyle says:

"His accent was \* \* \* singular, but it was by no means Scotch; at his first going to Oxford (where he did not stay long) he had peremptorily crushed down his Scotch (which he privately had in store in excellent condition to the very end of his life, producible with highly ludicrous effect on occasion), and adopted instead a strange, swift, sharp-sounding, fitful modulation, part of it pungent, quasi-labrant, other parts of it cooing, bantery, lovingly quizzical, which no charms of his fine ringing voice (metallic tenor of sweet tone), and of his vivacious rapid looks, and pretty lit-

tle attitudes and gestures, could not altogether reconcile you to, but in which he persisted through good report and bad. Old Braxey (Macqueen, Lord Braxfield), a sad old cynic, on whom Jeffrey used to set one laughing often enough, was commonly reported to have said, on hearing Jeffrey again after that Oxford sojourn, 'The laddie has clean tint his Scotch, and found nae English!' which was an exaggerative reading of the fact, his words and syllables being elaborately English (or English and *more*, *e. g.*, 'heppy,' 'my lud,' etc., etc.), while the tune he sang them to was all his own."

"His voice," says Carlyle, "clear, harmonious, and sonorous, had something of metallic in it, something almost plangent; never rose into alt, into any dissonance of shrillness, nor carried much the character of humor, though a fine feeling of the ludicrous always dwelt in him, as you would notice best when he got into Scotch dialect, and gave you, with admirable truth of mimicry, old Edinburgh incidents and experiences of his. \* \* \* His laugh was small and by no means Homeric; he never laughed loud (could not do it I should think), and indeed often sniggered slightly than laughed in any way."

Lord Cockburn is almost interesting in his description of the voice:

"His voice was distinct and silvery; so clear and precise that when in good order, it was heard above a world of discordant sounds. The utterance was excessively rapid; but without spluttering, slurring, or confusion; and regulated into deliberate emphasis, whenever this was proper. The velocity of the current was not more remarkable than its purity and richness. His command of language was unlimited."

Charles Pebody, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, June, 1870, writes:

"He never took up his pen till the candles were lit.

\* \* \* He did most of his work in those fatal hours of inspiration from ten at night till two or three o'clock in the morning. \* \* \* His manuscript was inexpressibly vile; for he wrote with great haste, \* \* \* generally used a wretched pen, \* \* \* and altered, erased, and interlined without the slightest thought of the printer or his correspondent. \* \* \* The explanation is, of course, the usual one with men of Jeffrey's temperament and genius. He had a horror and hatred of the work of the desk. \* \* \* His favorite hours of reading were in the morning and in bed, unless he had to deal with a subject of peculiar dignity, and in that case he read it up \* \* \* at night; for he had a notion that hints and suggestions, facts and thoughts, illustrations and authorities, picked up promiscuously over-night, assorted themselves in sleep round their proper centres, and thus reappeared in the morning in logical order."

Samuel Carter Hall, that diffuse, conceited and prosy hanger-on upon the outskirts of literature, seems to have forgotten his usual good-nature—which alone renders him endurable—in his observations about Jeffrey, but he admits that he did not know him very well.

"The far-famed editor of the *Edinburgh Review* had a few friends—firm and staunch and loving friends, and very many foes. Some of them he wilfully and wantonly made so; others he did not understand, and therefore misrepresented; others he rightly and conscientiously condemned, and soured into bitter and irrational hostility."

He further says:

"No doubt he was a bitter, caustic and often unjust critic; and during his long career of power there were not many cases wherein he exhibited generosity and

consideration, or that far-seeing intelligence which can anticipate and augur good as well as bad in the authors tried at his tribunal."

Jeffrey must at some time have treated Mr. Hall as the humbug he really was; the assertion that he had "*a few friends*" is absurdly inane and groundless; but then Hall was a fat-headed person, whose attempts to identify himself with the great men whom he happened to meet in a long life of pottering about literature and art have not sufficed to preserve his name in the memory of posterity.

## IX.

All—or nearly all—those who have left their testimony concerning him have dwelt upon his gentle and kindly nature. It is true that Lockhart, who naturally could not lose an opportunity of exalting Scott, quotes from a letter this quite ill-natured comparison:

"Jeffrey for the most part entertained us, when books were under discussion, with the detection of faults, blunders, absurdities, or plagiarisms. Scott took up the matter where he left it, recalled some compensating beauty or excellence for which no credit had been allowed, and by the recitation, perhaps, of one fine stanza, set the poor victim on his legs again."

The obvious implication is, that a poet—for it is plain that they were talking of poetry—may blunder, steal and be as absurd as he likes, but no one may speak of it if he has happened to write "one fine stanza."

One trait he possessed which many will accept as competent evidence of his sweetness of disposition, despite his occasional worrying of poor poets—his fondness for animals. Lord Cockburn says:



"The only friend, besides his wife, daughter, and servants, that he took with him (to London) was one he often mentions, 'Poor Poll,' a gray and very wise parrot. He was attached to all that sort of domestic companions, and submitted to much taunts on account of the soft travelling-basket for the little dog, 'Witch,' and the large cage for his bird. The hearth rug and the sofa were seldom free of his dumb pets."

He failed perceptibly about ten years before his death. In one of his charming letters to Miss Berry, given in her "Journal," he writes (1842):

"Though the *trachea* is at this moment my most urgent malady, the most obstinate and formidable is in another quarter, and one with which you are unfortunately but too well acquainted. You and I should be in a very tolerable condition if it were not for that *frigidus circum prae cordia sanguis*, though I confess I should scarcely have expected that *our hearts* should be the first things that failed about us, and (privately) take it rather amiss."\*

Although his health declined, he did not become morose or discouraged, but he maintained his interest in books and his fondness for his family while continuing his judicial labors almost without intermission. Stephen refers to "his kindly old age, when he could hardly have spoken sharply of a Lake poet." He was especially fond of Dickens, and his letters of appreciation are enthusiastic; he wept over Little Nell and Paul Dombey; and the son-in-law of Thackeray, while saying with what seems to be unnecessary contemptuousness that "the emotion is a little senile," admits that at least it was genuine. He revised the proof sheets of the first two volumes of Macaulay's

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\*Miss Berry's Journal (1865), iii. 475.

*History*, priding himself greatly upon his accuracy in the matter of punctuation. Hugh Miller, in his *Essays* (1862) refers to his remarkable energy when he was approaching the end.

"All accounts agree," says Miller, "in representing him as in private life one of the kindest and gentlest of mortals, ever surrounded by the aroma of a delicate sense of honor and a transparent truthfulness, equable in temper, in conversation full of a playful ease, and, with even his ordinary talk, ever glittering in an unpremeditated wit 'that loved to play, not wound.' Never was there a man more thoroughly beloved by his friends. Though his term of life exceeded the allotted three score and ten years, his fine intellect \* \* \* was to the last untouched by decay. Only four days previous to that of his death he sat upon the bench; only a few months ago he finished an article for his old *Review* distinguished by all the nice discernment and acumen of his most vigorous days. It is further gratifying to know, that though infected in youth and middle age by the widespread infidelity of the first French revolution, he was for at least the last few years of his life of a different spirit. He read much and often in his Bible; and he is said to have studied especially, and with much solicitude, the writings of St. Paul."

His death occurred at Craigcrook, on January 26, 1850. Empson, who married Jeffrey's only daughter, Charlotte, in 1838, and who succeeded Napier as editor of the *Edinburgh* in 1847, wrote on the 28th to Samuel Rogers:

"A three days' illness, apparently slight in its causes and symptoms, deprived us, at six o'clock, on Saturday evening, of our dear friend. Millar was not alarmed, nor Christison, until four and twenty hours before his death. He suffered no pain, but from the sense of increasing weakness. Wine and

brandy (he took nothing else) had no effect on his pulse or system. What there was of illness was a feverish cold, accompanied by a slight bronchial cough."

It was simply a case of a wearing out of the heart. On the 31st he was buried in the Dean Cemetery near Edinburgh.

Walter Bagehot's article in the *National Review* of October, 1855, on "The First Edinburgh Reviewers," gives us a pleasant, kindly, and discriminating opinion in regard to Jeffrey. Referring to his literary work, he says:

"Any one who should expect to find a pure perfection in these miscellaneous productions should remember their bulk. If all his reviews were reprinted they would be very many. And all the while he was a busy lawyer, was editor of the Review, did the business, corrected the proof sheets; and more than all—what one would have thought a very strong man's work—actually managed Henry Brougham. You must not criticise papers like these, rapidly written in a hurry of life, as you would the painful words of an elaborate sage, slowly and with anxious carefulness instructing mankind. \* \* \* He was neither a pathetic writer nor a profound writer; but he was a quick-eyed, bustling, black-haired, sagacious, agreeable man of the world. He had his day, and was entitled to his day; but a gentle oblivion must now cover his already subsiding reputation."

Does not the same "gentle oblivion" cover the reputation of all writers who are not great creators?

Sir Leslie Stephen, in the *National Dictionary of Biography*, presents a fair and scholarly estimate of the career and the character of Jeffrey, and writing a generation after the Bagehot review, seems to give

to the critic and lawyer a rank somewhat higher than Bagehot is inclined to bestow.

"If he had been less afraid of making blunders," Stephen remarks, "and trusted his natural instincts, he would have left a more permanent reputation, and achieved a less negative result."

Dr. Winchester is not too partial to Jeffrey, but he closes his discussion of the merits of the reviewer with some words of commendation.

"In briefest summary, then," he says, "we may admit that to Jeffrey, rather than to any other man, may be given the credit of raising the critical essay to the rank of a recognized literary form; that his writing is always brilliant and plausible, that his critical verdicts are always clear, and if upon matters within the range of his appreciation, sensible and just. On the other hand, it must also be admitted that his range of appreciation is limited; that his impressions are often worth more than the dogmas he invents to justify them; and that a considerable part of his fame was due to the immense and novel popularity of the *Review*, which raised him for a time to literary dictatorship almost like that of Dryden or Johnson."

It has been charged against him that he was without enthusiasm in his politics, despondent, pessimistic; prone to alarm for his country and for the interests of the landed proprietors; that he was indifferent to the development of new forces; that he belonged to a class of men who "detest enthusiasm wherever it may be found" and are antagonistic to "every great impulse of the kind that leads men to self-sacrifice and to wonder, or to a new world of ideal creation." These be brave words, full of sound and of the frothy order which captivates so many shallow minds. He could

not be popular; for, as Chesterton says: "the man who is popular must be optimistic about something, even if he is only optimistic about pessimism." Jeffrey was a Whig, and it is amusing to learn from one source that his radical views hampered his early life as a lawyer and from another that he was so ultra-conservative as to entertain some regard and respect for the rights of property. It is conceded that he was an advocate of reform in the criminal laws, the game laws, the anti-Catholic laws, the abuses of Chancery, and the evils of colonial slavery. Yet because he was unwilling to throw up his cap wildly in acclaiming every scheme devised by unscrupulous agitators for the universal betterment of mankind—and incidentally for their own personal advancement and aggrandisement—he is called "pessimistic," and "aristocratic." His clear vision foresaw the coming of a time when the majority of men, possessing the maximum of all the meaner qualities of man, would awake to a sense of their power and under the guise of a pretended zeal for the improvement of the race and its conditions, would seek to appropriate for the benefit of the lazy, vicious and unthrifty, the rewards of integrity, intelligence, and industry. If he was opposed to "the doctrine of equality and every form of socialism," it was not because he was aristocratic, in the ordinary meaning of the term, but because he was not deceived by false prophets and because he knew that the errors and faults of humanity cannot be eradicated by empty talk about the brotherhood of man and his indefinite perfectibility. He had no fondness for that equality which is secured by pulling down instead of by uplifting.

On the whole, it may be said of him that he was

an accomplished man; whose resources were always fully at his command; possessing no great inventive force, but a charm of speech and manner which enabled him to exercise over those whom he met, what is popularly known as personal magnetism; too fastidious, perhaps, in many of his tastes, but endowed with a capacity of literary judgment usually just if not always infallible. He distrusted his own ability to give to the world a book that would survive him; his critical faculties had been cultivated at the expense of the creative faculty. A reviewer of the work of others, he would have reviewed his own with like fearlessness and discrimination. He did not choose to subject himself to the later sneer of Disraeli and furnish another example of a critic who failed in literature. So we must seek his monument in the faded pages of the *Edinburgh Review*.

## MANNERS MAKYTH MAN

**W**HEN Swift was only a few years past thirty he amused himself by preparing a code for his conduct "when he should come to be old," and one of his rules was "not to scorn present ways, or wits, or fashions, or men, or war." But experience tells us that neither he nor any man who has passed the half-century mark and entered upon "commencing old age" ever followed that rule; it is a mere New Year resolve, made only to be broken. Perhaps it is not precisely "scorn" which is manifested by the elderly person, but rather disapproval, particularly if he has had a reasonable amount of success in life and has therefore acquired the habit of what is called "conservatism,"—that is to say, the desire to keep things as they were because all went very well then. We utter a truism when we say that the nature of man remains substantially the same from generation to generation, and that manners change much, but men continue to be about as wise or as silly as their fathers were. We are all apt to derive much comfort from the notion that in some indefinite future everything is to be perfect, every human being is to think only of the welfare of his brother man or sister woman; poverty, misery, sin, and crime are to disappear; and all mankind are to dwell in a serene atmosphere of peace, love, and harmony, forgetting what Mr. Locke calls "the glorious duty of selfishness." It will be a dull and stupid life when that millenium is reached, but

there is consolation in the thought that it will come to us at about the time when we find the bag of gold at the foot of the rainbow.

It was not surprising when at what in his customary grandiloquence of phrase the newspaper reporters styles "a banquet," I heard an eminent educator, of the "popular" variety, intimate that we must think only of the future,—not of the present or of the past. His approving audience applauded this sentiment vigorously. I am not sure that I know exactly what he meant. If one does not think at all of the past, he must reduce his mind to comparative vacuity, relinquish the "pleasures of memory," abandon the lessons of experience, part with the emotions of gratitude, patriotism, and filial affection; and if one does not think at all of the present, he is in much danger of being run over by a motor-car. In all likelihood the speaker did not intend to be taken literally; his utterance was only a bit of rhetorical exaggeration, which we often hear from orators after the sounding of the stroke of midnight. It is like the assertion of a distinguished University President, made on numerous occasions, to the effect that our boys should be brought up to be "as much unlike their fathers as possible;" which amazing precept, if carried to its logical result, would require us to educate the son of a learned and pious divine to be wholly devoid of learning and thoroughly devoted to crime. He did not intend to violate the commandment about honoring one's father but, in his modesty, he merely wished to add to the decalogue a new commandment—"Forget thy father and thy mother and be like *me*." One trouble about these showy, banquet-bred generalizations is, that while they tickle the ears of the banqueters who have



banqueted freely, they are seldom or never strictly true, and they do not look or sound as well on the morning after as they did in the glamour of the cigars and the champagne. Nevertheless "it is in the nature of the mind of man" according to Bacon, "to the extreme prejudice of knowledge to delight in the spacious liberalities of generalities, as in a Champaign region, and not in the inclosures of particularity." We must not take the after-dinner speaker *au pied de la lettre*. There is much to be said in favor of contemplating the future; but we had a Greek saying in my college days which I would like to give in the original, but refrain, because I have wholly forgotten my accents—"the future will be secure if your present work be well done."

The famous Dean was right, in the main; we should not scorn present ways, or wits, or fashions, or men, or war—although I am inclined to doubt whether we should not have a wholesome scorn of war, past, present or future, if war is what it was concisely, monosyllabically and forcibly pronounced to be by the great soldier who marched through Georgia. Yet it may be permitted even to the middle aged to indulge in a little mild criticism; if everyone, young and old, should join in a chorus of approbation of everything, the monotony would be unendurable; it would be like the constant diet of candy to which the young Duke in *Patience* objected so strongly. One need not be scolding or finding fault all the time: but the only thing which is more odious than a confirmed pessimist is a persistent optimist. The moderate pessimist—if logically such a being may exist—has his uses. The sourness of the lemon adds to the palatability of the succulent oyster, or, to avail of a simile for which an apology is due to

the enthusiastic prohibitionists of Maine and Kansas, the tinge of the bitters in the pre-prandial cocktail lends an indescribable charm to that reprehensible but pleasant beverage. As the author of "Excursions of a Book-Lover" said of late:

"The optimist is good in his place, but as much may be said of the pessimist. Not always, but often, there is about the optimist a certain vulgarity not to be discovered in the pessimist. There is an offensive smacking of the lips over the good things of this life, and an indifference to the troubles of others that not infrequently render the optimist somewhat disgusting to men of finer nerve and kinder heart."

But the optimist is "popular," and most men crave popularity.

An excellent young American, then recently graduated from one of our best colleges—which, with a fond but mistaken pride, we call "universities"—some years ago, in company with a fellow-American, was sauntering through the lovely gardens of New College, Oxford, and tempted by the smooth grass, reclined thereon while each indulged in the luxury of a cigar. To them appeared of a sudden a venerable guardian who, without uttering a word, beckoned mysteriously to them. Impressed by his age and majesty, they arose and were led by him beyond the gate, where he requested them to turn about and view that sculptured relic. "What do you see?" he asked in those sepulchral accents common among venerable Britons in authority. They said that they had observed that gate and had admired its beauty. "But," said the solemn dignitary, "what do you read there?" They deciphered the inscription "Manners Makyth Man." "Gentlemen do not smoke in the gardens of New College," said the white-haired

custodian. No doubt it was his favorite joke, well crusted by years of placid enjoyment.

When William of Wykeham devised his celebrated motto he was not referring, as we know, to behavior towards others as much as to what the Roman friends of our youth, whom it is now unfashionable to mention, denominated *mores*—a course of life, morals in the largest sense. But there s a measure of truth in the construction of the wise saying adopted by the ancient keeper of New College Gardens. If the “manners” of the twentieth century “makyth man,” the product is not particularly agreeable. But the manners of the nineteenth were no doubt as unpleasant to the stately folk of its predecessor, and so on *ad infinitum*: especially the manners of the young people who are following the course laid down for them by the great educator and are so absorbed in the study of the future that they have little time to think of the duties and proprieties of the present.

Certain laws of decency may not be violated without causing decay or degeneracy in the moral fibre of the offenders. The youth of either sex who habitually disregard the obvious requirements of politeness—a word now almost obsolete—and who are absolutely unconscious of the rights and the feelings of others, are surely not to be expected to aid materially in the development of altruism, to devote themselves to promoting the good of mankind, or to accomplish much in advancing the cause of common humanity. The modern idea that young people, at least those of the more prosperous orders of society, are to be indulged to the top of their bent, that they are to be entertained and amused at the expense of their elders, that they are to have “a good time” because in due course they will

become old and cannot, is largely the efficient cause of their folly and their indifference to the demands of ordinary courtesy. It is responsible for the misfortune that the majority of our young people, principally alas! of our young women, are inclined to be vain, heedless, self-willed, and noisy. The conduct of a drove of them in public leads us to wonder if indeed these are the heirs of all the ages, the best result of our highly organized civilization. Now I must concede that the accusation is not new, for we find my Lord Chesterfield, writing in 1767 to his hopeful godson:

“Learning without politeness makes a disagreeable Pedant, and politeness without learning makes a superficial frivolous Puppy. I am sorry to say that in general the Youth of the present age have neither. Their manners are illiberal, and their ignorance is notorious. They are sportsmen, they are jockeys, they know nor love nothing but dogs and horses, racing and hunting.”

But he was writing only of the males: now we are doubling the offense of it, just as we are threatened with a doubling of the evils of universal suffrage by giving the so-called right of voting to the feminine half of the community. What Chesterfield wrote might well have been written to-day, with a few additions. The trouble always is that the offending do not care to please; to them it is a sad sacrifice of time and labor. As the same wise observer says:

“The first great step toward pleasing is the desire to please, and whoever really desires it will please to a certain degree.”

But in our youthful sybarites of to-day the idea of pleasing any but their own dear selves is manifestly strange and abhorrent.

Sport and play are good things in due moderation; but when the young men and women of any land think only of sports, devote their waking hours wholly to sports and play, can talk of nothing but sports and play, that land is doomed to decadence. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, we know; but all play and no work makes Jack a very stupid and silly boy, and Jill comes tumbling after.

Such assertions are naturally distasteful to the general; and whoever reads them will be inclined to cry out in contempt, if he deems them worthy of so much attention. Should any of our omniscient newspaper folk honor them with a word of comment, it will be indignant, petulant, and abusive. For the newspaper is bound to flatter its readers: and a large portion of its daily contents consists of reports of games, sports, and "society intelligence"—the marriages of Daisy and Jack, George and Gladys, their attendants, their wedding gifts, and what they are going to do in the way of enjoying life after they have ended the honeymoon. We have pages on pages about base ball games, prize-fights, golf and tennis tournaments, automobile contests, competition in what is fantastically termed "aviation,"—all the ephemeral topics of "play." Soon we may have columns about hop-sotch and marbles. Let us be thankful however that the immense mass of it crowds out the chronicles of crime and the indecent details of all sorts of occurrences which may better be buried in the latrines devoted to the purpose of hiding such rottenness from public view.

But modern lack of politeness is not due wholly to the spoiled children; the adults are little better. We have read of late some favor-currying screeds in our daily press written by cunning foreigners in order to

win the good will and consequent pecuniary profit which attends the expression of well-devised flattery, in which it is asserted that New Yorkers are the most polite people on earth. That sort of talk usually elicits the unqualified approval of the flattered; but when Hopkinson Smith dared to tell the truth he was denounced as severely as a public favorite ever is by the gentlemen of the newspapers.

It is permissible to scold occasionally about minor things. I suppose that I am what is called "grouchy"—a word not to be found in the best dictionaries, but yet an admirable word, and one that most of us understand; although in my youth I would probably have associated it only with that luckless Marshal of France who bore, justly or unjustly, the blame for the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo. One manifestation of the rudeness of the day and of the growing disregard of considerations of propriety, may be trifling in itself but it is typical. Men, and commonly young men, now smoke in public or semi-public dining rooms when women are present. This breach of the law of good manners is not peculiar to boys; I have seen with disgust a distinguished American diplomat indulging himself in this unpardonable assault upon the canons of good behavior. Smoking is not a grave offence when it is practised in a proper place: far be it from a confirmed smoker of nearly fifty years standing to utter a fanciful objection to it; but there are many otherwise sociable and admirable people to whom the odor of tobacco and especially of cigarettes is exceedingly offensive, particularly when they are only half through dinner. The man who is most devoid not only of manners but of morals is the cigarette smoker who puffs the acrid, noisome fumes in your face at all times and

in all seasons, even at your breakfast table, and adds insult by depositing the ashes and the "butts" on the floor, on the table, on the library shelves, or in any place which may be convenient for him, however inconvenient it may be for his host, while the smouldering, nauseating remnants poison your air and upset your digestion. For this shameless offender, boiling oil and melted lead are scarcely adequate punishments. Yet so common has become the gross abuse of smoking in dining rooms of hotels and restaurants, and even at meals in private houses, that hardly any one may be found at this day to raise his feeble voice in protest against it. It is a modern abomination, and in all shame and humility I confess that I have been guilty of it myself.

There is another petty annoyance to which we may refer merely as a proof that men otherwise estimable enough are thoughtless regarding the natural rights of others. The telephone is one of the most serviceable and convenient nuisances of modern times. It is peremptory czar, and when one is "rung up" there seems to be an absolute necessity of answering the call forthwith. Nine times out of ten the calling person—generally summoning you on business more important to him than to you—after you have responded to the shrill girl who operates the machinery, compels you to wait until it suits his convenience to come to the transmitter; and there one sits, patiently or otherwise, wasting his own time, awaiting the pleasure of the lordly personage who has disturbed him and who ought to have been ready at the instant. This particular exhibition of disgraceful effrontery is most common among the possessors of what my friend, the Complete Letter Writer of Wall Street, used to call "the unconscious

insolence of conscious wealth." It is a sad reflection that chafe as we do under the inexcusable brutality of it, we generally submit to it chiefly because we hesitate to "make a fuss" over a serious abuse when we are compelled to endure so much greater ones; but it arouses flames of wrath and I am always trying to plan an effective method of rebuke. When people send tickets for "charitable entertainments" and ask us to return them if we do not pay for them we take our revenge by throwing tickets and all in the waste basket; but I do not know exactly what to do about the odious man who "telephones" and compels me to wait for him. Some day there will be an assassination and a verdict of justifiable homicide.

The luckless person who is obliged to ride in our street cars or to walk upon our thoroughfares must recognize the sad truth that in order to preserve his equilibrium or to proceed with an ordinary amount of comfort he must exercise that eternal vigilance which is said to be the price of liberty. On the cars, one must not expect of course any thoughtful regard on the part of any passenger for the convenience or the comfort of any other passenger, or even any respect for laws and ordinances. I am referring chiefly to New York and Philadelphia, for there is a better state of affairs in Boston and even a worse condition in Chicago, where most of the passengers are mere ordinary thugs. Men—and women too—crowd the rear platform when there is abundant room inside, preventing entrance or exit, the male offender generally puffing a cigar made of near-tobacco, an offence prohibited by law, but nobody seems to have the courage to call for the enforcement of the law, mainly because our learned and discriminating Police Magistrates appear to have a contemptuous



opinion of the complainant in such cases and he is usually lucky if he escapes without sarcastic comments upon his absurdly finical temperament, duly reported in the newspapers with admiring glee. Those who have seats establish themselves in such a position as to occupy the place of two, and seldom or never make room for incomers. The strap-hangers infest the rear of the vehicle in order to cause the greatest amount of trouble for the others, and are indignant at a modest request to "move up;" and those seated ones who do not sprawl about in an effort to look out of the window, cross their legs and obstruct the aisle. The women commonly take up room beside them with boxes and bundles, oblivious of those who are obliged to stand. If any one enters or departs by the front door, he rarely closes it after him. In short, no consideration for others is exhibited except in one instance; men still offer a seat to a woman who has a child in her arms.

On the sidewalks the shambling cubs persistently shuffle along, usually on the wrong side, and when a hapless pedestrian happens to be going in an opposite direction, he is generally shoved into the gutter. Down town, since the advent of the feminine stenographers and typewriters, those gentle, soft-voiced, over-dressed creatures crowd the walks and promenade three or four abreast while they shriek their amatory or sartorial confidences to one another and monopolize the pavement, regardless of the progress of those who are forced to encounter their serried ranks. The familiar device of setting one's shoulder firmly to meet the onset of the cub cannot be resorted to as against the type-writer mob; and the unhappy wayfarer meekly betakes himself to the middle of the street where he braves the terrors of the lordly truck-driver and the haughty chauff-

feur, and stumbles over the cart of the foreign fruit-vendor who, for some inscrutable reason, is allowed to occupy, free of charge, large portions of the public domain in the transaction of his personal and private business and abounds mostly in our narrowest and most crowded roadways.

I plead guilty to being a sour, ill-tempered, elderly gentleman, unable to find amusement and delight in submitting to the trivial insults of the merry creatures who think that any caitiff who resents their ill-behavior must be a hopeless misanthrope. Why, my friend, should *you* complain about little things like these, which make me so happy? Why do you grumble when I turn over the seat in the railway car so that I may monopolize four places, one for my valise, one for my golfing outfit, and two for my sacred person while you stand abashed and wistful, tossed about much, like the pious Æneas, as the train dashes over the curves? Why do you utter sniffs of disgust when I open the window as we enter the long tunnel, in order that free admission may be afforded for the coal-gas and the smoke? What if the sum of such trifles makes up a good deal of the misery of existence? It is *your* misery, not mine, and you are a mouldering relic of a vanished time when men wished to please, and therefore practised the art of politeness.

As far as the misuse of our roads and streets is concerned, the fiend of the motor-cycle and the monarch of the automobile are the most oppressive and tyrannical. The ordinarily decent citizen becomes utterly destitute of morals when he is in control of a motor-car, wrapped in his own mantle of unrestricted power. We submit meekly to be driven into the ditch, to be covered by the dust, to be deafened by his hideous "honks," and

to be stifled by his unnecessary smoke. We are grateful if when he has run us down and mutilated our unoffending bodies, he will condescend to pick us up and carry us to the nearest hospital. In absolute disregard of others, the hired chauffeur is far surpassed by the owner—or the owner's son. That is why, when I am trudging along the highway and behold an approaching car whose owner is in charge of its movements, I generally climb a tree. No doubt when I own a motor-car myself, my extreme views on the subject may be slightly modified.

The decay of good manners may be due in part to an over-estimate of the value of what are called "democratic ideals" which are no new things, and which as understood in these times, are based upon the precept that you should love your neighbor as yourself—if he has a vote—but that your neighbor is in no way bound to love you, unless you go a little further and let him kick you when he is so inclined. The gospel of equality among men is preached to us with much fervor and insistence, particularly by clergymen, college professors, and candidates for office. I am not in accord with Francis Parkman when he spoke of modern democracy as

"organized ignorance, led by unscrupulous craft, and marching, amid the applause of fools, under the flag of equal rights."

It is needless to get as excited about it as all that. There is no real objection to it, although it is partly founded upon a fallacious interpretation of one of Mr. Jefferson's "glittering generalities;" it has a grand sound and it is pleasing to most of those who listen to it. When we reflect upon it with coolness, we know that men are not and cannot be equal in everything. No

legislation can make them equal in thrift, in morals, in virtue, or in intellect. Equality of opportunity may perhaps be ensured by man-made laws, but they must be better framed than our laws generally are. The differences among men were created by the *fiat* of the Almighty, a decree of higher force than even the judgment of the great tribunal in Washington—pronounced by a divided court. Conceding however that every man is as good as every other man, one of the difficulties to be found in the results of the disinterested efforts of our apostles of equality is that the uncultured person appears to entertain the opinion that it is necessary, in order to maintain his equality with the cultured, to domineer over him, to put him down, to humiliate him. It may be that in the work of making the world perfect we should compel the educated and refined to abate something of their refinement, so as not to offend the others; but it seems unprofitable to exalt the vulgar merely to preserve a so-called equality. The honest son of toil who dons a clean shirt once a week and indulges in a bath twice a year, is fully as deserving as the luxurious mortal who changes his shirt twice a day and has his cold plunge every morning, but must we bow down to him and adore him because of his noble indifference to the mere luxuries of fresh linen and pure water? For pity's sake, *mes camarades*, as our own great Walt would call you, have a little tolerance for the clean; do not boast yourselves so greatly of your superiority of simplicity. Do not despise those who delight in books, for example. We know that it is a miserable weakness to be fond of books, but pray do not crush us worms under your iron heels for so trivial an offence. Have some regard for our poor tastes and preferences; it is not incumbent upon you to trample on

us in order to make us your equals. We do not complain of most of your ways and customs, of your fondness for certain strenuous forms of diversion, of your mode of speech, or even of your manifest purpose of extortion when you deal with our property. We ask only that you should give your lofty consideration now and then to what is commonly called "The Golden Rule." Really, it is a good rule; Congress has not yet abolished it as constituting an improper restriction upon the freedom of interstate commerce; but that may come to pass. Even our later Presidents have not framed and thrust upon our intelligent legislators any bill to do away with it or to modify it in accordance with popular demand in the West, so as to read:

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, provided however that in doing it unto others you shall require the others to submit in all respects to the wishes and preferences of the majority of the qualified voters in the land, including all Italians, Hungarians, Scandinavians and other emigrants and every ignorant being in the country except Indians not taxed."

We know that the cry of the day is, in substance:

"Liberty and Humbug, now and forever, one and inseparable."

But be careful lest in your high-minded aspiration to be so much the equals of the "better classes," you succeed in putting them so far under you, that you destroy the government which protects you in your place of eminence; and in your effort to tax property to the utmost you may sooner or later be unable to find any property to tax.

Manners makyth man; the lack of them makyth—something quite different.



## THE WAR ON THE COLLEGES

**I**T is undoubtedly reprehensible rashness in an ordinary person, untrained in the profession of pedagogy to express views about so grave a matter as education. The expert men who devote their energies exclusively to the task of training the youthful mind are apt to eye with justifiable jealousy or indignation the attempt of the outsider to invade their peculiar province, and their prohibitory signs are as manifest to the beholder as are those in the Central Park which warn the heedless to "keep off the grass." But the average American has a way of bestowing upon mankind the boon of his own opinions, whether in regard to politics, economics, science, or religion, without much hesitancy about his own competence, in which respect he is not unlike his fellow-beings of other nationalities; and after he has reached an age when he begins to lead what Mr. Benson calls "a life of reflection, rather than of action, of contemplation rather than of business," he begins to feel that it is not always those who are engaged in the turmoil of the battle who are most capable of judging the merits of the campaign and that the unconcerned spectator may be able to arrive at sound conclusions with as much accuracy and clearness as the one who is in the thick of the fight; at least, that is his own judgment.

We are passing through a season of much uneasiness among those who are occupied in the business of education, particularly about our colleges, which we persist

is calling "universities," whether or not they are possessed of university equipment. The heads of these institutions, with a few worthy exceptions, appear to be the most distrustful concerning the efficacy of their own labors. Naturally the great body of the uneducated, delighting to hear from such unimpeachable authority that the colleges are not what they ought to be and that the boasted education which colleges are supposed to furnish is of little worth, indulge in much self-gratulation over the fact that *they* never wasted their time upon such a trifle; while the newspapers, who aim to please the majority, swell the chorus of censure and crow lustily over the folly of spending valuable years in acquiring something which "is of no use" to the ambitious individual seeking for wealth, or power, or whatever the man of the day most covets. Behold the fall of him who has presumed to look down on "the common people" because he was possessed of an education which turns out to be only a sham! And the voice of the common people is divine; yet I could never perceive the wisdom of the remark attributed to Lincoln, to the effect that God must have greatly loved the common people because he made so many of them; for that might with equal wisdom be said of mosquitoes or of the ordinary house-fly.

One of the consequences of these apologetic out-givings of some of our presidents has been the out-pouring of the spirit of a few of the persons who hang upon the outskirts of education. At a recent assemblage in Boston of what is styled, with the customary grandeur, "The National Education Association," the principal of a New York High School and the Superintendent of Public Schools in Wisconsin delivered themselves with portentous wisdom of such observations as these:



"There is no spectacle in American life to-day more pitiful than the contrast between what the college advertises to do and what it performs." "The teaching by our college professors is the poorest in the country." "The average third-year boy in the high school is more able to think, discuss and express an idea than the average college student two years older." "The young man learns in college that he need not work; he comes to regard his college as a social and sporting club." "Colleges with their narrow and false ideals of culture \* \* \* their domination has reached a degree of intolerable impertinence." "The high schools in desperation have been drawing a line of cleavage between those fitting for college and those who are not. This is unnecessary, unfitting, and undemocratic."

After such luminous remarks it is not surprising that the distinguished fragment of this Association, known as "The Department of Secondary Education," adopted a resolution declaring that there should be a recognition as electives in college-entrance requirements "of all subjects well taught in the high schools"—manual training, commercial branches, and agriculture; and the requirement of two languages in addition to English was forcibly denounced. The force of folly could no further go. The *Evening Post*, in an editorial article of comment, justly says:—

"That situation represents the culmination of a wave of criticism and restlessness which in large measure owes its strength and volume to what we cannot but feel has been a want of perception, on the part of many of our leading college presidents especially, of the issue really involved in the agitation about our colleges which has for some years been so much to the fore. To be conscious of deficiencies, ready to admit them and anxious to remedy them, is one thing; it is quite another to assume a position of apologetic

defensiveness, to talk as though the faults of the college were all there was in the institution, to declare that the college is useless unless it devotes itself to a task quite other than that for which it has stood in the past. And yet this is essentially the attitude in which more than one of our leading college presidents has allowed himself to be placed. They should have known—we hardly think they can have actually realized it—that such talk as this means not the improvement of the college, but its abolition; not greater efficiency in attaining the aims to which it has historically been devoted, but the abandonment of those aims.

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Now, the fact is that a great deal of the stuff that is talked about colleges by such persons as those from whom the above quotations are made is simply rubbish. There are, of course, young men who go to college and don't work, but to talk as though this were true of all of them, or of a majority of them, is to fly in the face of the simplest observation. Very much the greater part of the young men in our colleges work as hard at their studies as can reasonably be expected. As for the superiority of the third-year high school boy to the college youth two years older, this is, of course, a mere personal assertion. And the terrible hardships of differentiating between courses designed to be followed by a college training and those that are not, rests, so far as we can see, upon the idea that a college has no rights that a true democrat is bound to respect. It may be that the objects which a college pursues are not worth pursuing; but so long as it does pursue them, it must of necessity demand, on the part of entering students, such preparation as is necessary for their attainment."

The substance of the accusations made against our colleges seems to be that their courses of instruction do not tend to develop strong, earnest workers or to "fit young men for the toils and struggles of active life";

at least that is about all I am able to make out of the multitude of words with which we are deluged by the discontented and chiefly by some of our college and university presidents. It is unfortunate that the heads of our "institutions of learning" think that it is incumbent on them to undertake the improvement of the world instead of giving their chief attention to the discharge of their immediate duties; and they exhibit a strong inclination to become autocratic and dictatorial as if, forsooth, their accidental elevation to the place of head-teachers imposed upon them the labor of regulating everything and everybody. In this respect they certainly surpass such old-fashioned presidents as Mark Hopkins, Noah Porter, and James McCosh, who did some good work in the cause of education, although they did not devote much time to the business of "uplifting," or rather of perpetually talking about it to miscellaneous audiences. There is one other charge; it is said that the colleges foster idleness and exclusiveness, producing mere *dilettanti*. A *dilettante* is, I believe, "a lover or admirer of the fine arts," and not altogether an abandoned wretch or a moral outcast. Rather an extensive observation of college graduates during the past quarter of a century has not disclosed to me any considerable number of *dilettanti*. I have generally found them to be earnest and conscientious men, at all events those of the professions. Most of this talk about aristocracy and exclusiveness, luxury, lavish expenditure and lazy self-indulgence among college students is pure twaddle. In every large body of young men there will be idlers and spendthrifts, and the proportion of them will be about as great as that which is found in the entire community. As to "luxury," ideas change with the progress of time. When I entered col-

lege over forty years ago, my father thought me "luxurious" because I had a carpet in my room; and it was a very cheap carpet at that. To the survivors of that time, what are necessities now seem to be luxuries, but yet they are not exactly sybaritic; facilities for bathing, for example—and other facilities. The men who were graduated in those days were none the worse perhaps for their lack of comforts; nor does it seem to me that the graduates of to-day are any the worse for having them. Are these young men of the twentieth century inferior to their ancestors? If they are, we are obliged to infer that the system of college training then prevalent must have been more efficient than it is now, and that the modern improvements of which we have been so proud have not been improvements at all; that the millions on millions of money extracted from plutocratic pockets have been obtained on false pretenses and have been virtually wasted in perceptorial extravagances. As to aristocratic exclusiveness, I will have something to say later.

I assert with much indignation that the charge that "the young man learns in college that he need not work" and that "he comes to regard his college as a social and sporting club" is false and silly, the creation either of ignorance, or of malice; and I am sorry for the unfortunate lads whom necessity compels to attend public schools or high schools controlled by such persons as those who are guilty of disseminating the libels proclaimed at the meeting in Boston.

We know that the college curriculum has been vastly enlarged in scope, the courses of study improved, and the opportunities of students immeasurably increased. To say that "the teaching by our college professors is the poorest in the country" is a contemptible slur that is

sufficient to discredit all the allegations of the high-school orator. The age of matriculation has been advanced, thereby delaying the time of graduation and postponing the beginning of the earning period, in order that preparation may be more thorough and the men better fitted to avail of their greater opportunities. But, to leave the high-school apostles for the moment, all this, according to some of our presidents, does not result in producing men really superior to the graduates of a generation or more ago. If that is so, if the new men are no wiser or stronger than their predecessors, then it is manifest that the "old education" which we used to enjoy is not to be sneered at, and that, after all, it may not be prudent to bring up young men to be "as much unlike their fathers as possible."

Well, as far as that is concerned, much depends on your point of view and the "point of view" at present is mainly of those who are convinced that nothing in life is so important as to "push" and "get ahead." There is much vague talk, principally rhetorical, and largely made up of those well-sounding platitudes about uplifting humanity, and devoting ourselves to the nation's service, and abstaining from the pursuit of riches, and sternly devoting ourselves to obedience to such laws, for example, as those which forbid one to enclose a letter in an express package, and striving for the triumph of those charmingly indefinite "democratic ideals," the precise nature whereof we are not much enlightened about, because the orator scorns details. It all means, however, that there is but one thing needful for man—unrest; for if you rest, even for a moment, you are sure to be passed in the race, life being merely a race. I am tempted to quote from Mr. Benson's es-

say on "Contentment," for he dares to say what most of us are timid about saying:

"The gospel that I detest," he says, "is the gospel of success, the teaching that every one ought to be discontented with his setting, that a man ought to get to the front, clear a space around him, eat, drink, make love, cry and strive and fight. It is all to be at the expense of feeblers people. That is a detestable ideal, because it is the gospel of tyranny rather than the gospel of equality. \* \* \* The result of it is the lowest kind of democratic sentiment, which says, 'Every one is as good as every one else, and I am a little better,' and the jealous spirit, which says, 'If I cannot be prominent, I will do my best that no one else shall be.'"

He calls our attention to the custom of disguising rank individualism under a pretense of desiring to improve social conditions:

"The clean handed social reformer, who desires no personal advantage, and whose influence is a matter of anxious care, is one of the noblest of men; but now that schemes of social reform are fashionable, there are a number of blatant people who use them for purposes of personal advancement. What I rather desire is to encourage a very different kind of individualism, the individualism of the man who realizes that the hope of the race depends upon the quality of life, upon the number of people who live quiet, active, gentle, kindly, faithful lives, enjoying their work and turning for recreation to the nobler and simpler sources of pleasure—the love of nature, poetry, literature and art."

Of course this is all very old-fashioned and contemptible; it tends to luxury and to exclusiveness, and is suitable only to the wretched minority.

Now, in spite of the fact that the gospel of strenuousness, so loudly proclaimed by the man who enjoys the distinction of being the most famous of living Americans, is the one which appeals most forcibly to the popular mind, there is an element of vulgarity about it which does not commend it to the few who consider that there are virtues in the quiet and useful life as well as in the noisy, showy life; and there are such things as "nature, poetry, literature, and art," as well as steam, electricity, and improvement of the condition of the day laborer; and that there is something beyond the mere doing of things which, aided or unaided by the doer, find their way into the columns of the daily press. Take literature, for example. One of our most celebrated University Presidents has said:

"It is plain that you cannot impart 'university methods' to thousands, or create 'investigators' by the score, unless you confine your university education to matters which dull men can investigate, your laboratory training to tasks which mere plodding diligence and submissive patience can compass. Yet, if you do so limit and constrain what you teach, you thrust taste and insight and delicacy of perception out of the schools, exalt the obvious and the merely useful above the things which are only imaginatively or spiritually conceived, make education an affair of tasting, and handling, and smelling, and so create Philistia, that country in which they speak of 'mere literature.' "\*"

But if you may not teach this love of literature, for its own sake, by rule and formula, in the arid quarters of the class room, you may, if you know how, create an appropriate atmosphere in which this love may be fostered and developed, and it is not an atmosphere of

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\*Woodrow Wilson: "Mere Literature," 1896.

agriculture, commercial branches and veterinary surgery. If the chief aim of our colleges is to bring up what are called "men of action," publicists, politicians, pedagogues, scientific discoverers, and social reformers, then the Philistine will dominate and Gradgrind will triumph. Where the atmosphere is essentially utilitarian, you will never cultivate the flowers of "mere literature." The man who has what was once called a "liberal education," that which ought to be had by every one who deserves the "grand old name of gentleman," is like him who has a deep and abiding fondness for animated creation which does not find expression in the killing of birds and animals under the specious pretence of a devotion to the study of "faunal nature."

The gentlemen of the high-school class have a great horror of what we call "the classics." For many years it has been the cry of the utilitarian,

"What is the good of Latin and Greek? Of what use are they to men of strength, and force, and lofty aspiration?"

So in deference to outcry, for we yield habitually to the views of those who make the most noise, the study of those languages has almost ceased and that of science occupies the primacy. Perhaps this circumstance has contributed largely to the diminution in the number of scholarly men of general cultivation. In their place we have chemists, engineers, and electricians; men of great capacity and usefulness; but there is no good reason why they should not be men of culture as well as the lawyers, clergymen and physicians, and no doubt some of them are. In their technical training they need not deprive themselves of that general culture which a college education was meant to give and ought to



give, so that all who have had its benefits may have some common ground on which to meet. It is not necessary that all of them should be skillful Latinists or Grecians, but no one can justly be called a scholar who has no knowledge whatever of Greek or Latin. He may be a good chemist, engineer or electrician, and he may be possessed of genius, but he will not be an educated man in the broad sense. It is no answer to say that there are great men who knew not a word of those languages. It might as well be said that no one need know anything of the Bible because Plato and Socrates never knew anything of it; or that no man should ever "go to college" because Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln never did. The inquiry whether Lincoln would have been what he was if he had been a college man always seemed to me to be profitless. If he had been educated as a soldier, a physician, or a theologian he might not have been President, but that does not prove that we should not have soldiers, or doctors, or ministers. One might as well conjecture what his life would have been if he had been born in a city instead of in a Kentucky log cabin.

I am aware that the method of teaching "the classics" which treats them merely as vehicles for imparting a knowledge of grammar or etymology is worthless. There has been too much of that and too many questions such as the famous one "who dragged whom how many times around the walls of what?" Such abominations have disgusted generations of pupils and made them "comprehend, but never love" the literature of Greece and Rome. But there are remedies for such evils.

The humor of the situation lies in the fact that the assailants of our colleges—insiders as well as outsiders

—seem to think that there is a vested right in the multitude to have a college education, and that particular form of education with which the multitude is pleased. They ignore the right of the minority to seek the culture which that minority desires, and to have a college where it may enjoy its own form of education. I do not deny that my fellow-being who craves the “commercial branches,” manual training, agriculture, veterinary surgery and all that, is entitled to go where such things are taught, but I deny his right to drag me there with him, and to deprive me of what used to be called “the humanities”—liberal studies. He may be just as good a man as I am—perhaps a much better man than I can hope to be—but I do not admit his right to compel me to associate with him if his tastes, manners, and personal qualities are not agreeable to me. He may call me “aristocratic” and “exclusive” if I prefer culture to mere utility, and to choose my own friends; but if I am forced to attend a college or a university where I am constrained by law to fraternize with him, then there is no true democracy about it; it is tyranny, as Mr. Benson says. My individual liberty of choice is destroyed. Why he should want to live with me against my will, I cannot divine; I should think he would find it as uncomfortable as I should. If Doe, an aspiring devotee of useful studies, insists upon having a college where Roe is obliged to associate with him, willy-nilly—a situation he will never find in the world after his graduation—let him have it, but he will fail in one essential point—Roe will not go there. If Roe selects a university which is more or less “exclusive,” as every true university must be, Doe has no right to demand that he, too, shall be admitted there on his own terms and have everything changed to suit his preferences.

The idea that because all men in our land have equal political rights they have likewise equal social rights is not democratic; it is socialistic. If I want to ride in a Pullman car instead of in an ordinary coach, I mean to do it unless I am prohibited from so doing by some legislative enactment; and to that extent will be as undemocratic as I please.

Far be it from an humble person like myself to assert that the noble task of solving the great social problems of the day should be shunned and avoided by our university men; but there are other things in life. There is room for all the workers, but there must be some room also for the gentle scholars who love the less vigorous forms of reflection and thought. There is room for the scholar who does not trouble his soul with envious feelings toward those who are more largely blessed—or cursed—with riches. Too much stress is laid upon the sorrows of the poor young man who thinks that he is wronged by those who, having more money and different associations, are not disposed to embrace him and to call him brother. The tastes of men, young and old, are various; the college world is not and cannot be made to be wholly different from the world in general. Young men as well as their elders will and must select their own companions, their own fields of usefulness, their own objects of endeavor, interest and ambition. According to my own observation, the lads form friendships in college with very little concern about the matter of wealth; the element of snobbishness is lacking in them. But they will not be coerced into familiar association with any one.

"The culture and manurance of minds in youth," said Bacon, "hath such a forcible, though unseen operation, as hardly any length of time or contraction of

labor can countervail it afterwards." But it must be an intellectual preparation, and our professors need not expect to make human nature over again or essentially different from what it has always been; they must seek to guide men and not to re-create them.

Let no one say that I mean to ignore the moral and the ethical; they are comprehended in the intellectual. The doctrinaires and the visionaries of the day are wedded to the delusion that there are no ethics or morals except the socialistic; those who disagree with them are thrust aside with the sneering epithets of "aristocrat" and "patrician." There were ethics before Emma Goldman and morals before Karl Marx. True democracy is not the rule of the rabble; it is the rule of the people of sound sense and wisdom. We want no "politics" in our colleges. Let our college leaders abstain from politics, which distract their minds from their legitimate work and lure them into the perilous regions of demagoguery. Political ambition has spoiled many good lawyers; it has ruined some promising university presidents.

















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